

the folk, roots and world music magazine

# penguin eggs

## old man luedecke

**buddy  
miller**

the  
penguin  
eggs  
interview

**plus**

**alex cuba**

**sam lee**

**amelia curran**

**the blue warblers**

“Cowboy Jack Clement was there, Guy Clark, the guy from The Black Keys. It was, ‘Wow! I live in little Chester and here I’m going to make a record and all these guys are hanging out’.”



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Friday, March 8

**Corky Siegel Chamber Blues**

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**Alex\*Cuba**

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**MARCH/APRIL**

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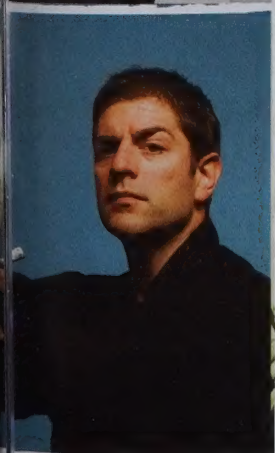
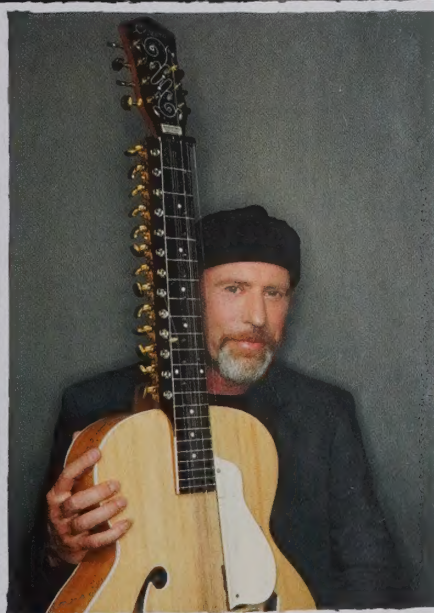
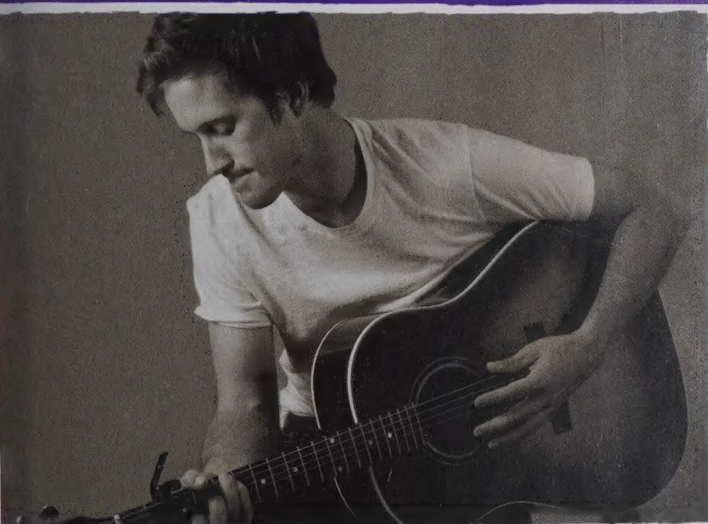
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# penguin eggs

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for many young, gifted performers.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records.

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## editorial

Some things need saying in no uncertain terms. So let it be said: *Sing Out!* needs help and it needs it now. The venerable American folk magazine has struggled financially for some time, a point made abundantly clear when the Autumn edition arrived in the post. Reduced to half its normal size, it now offers its extensive record review section online for subscribers to save on printing costs. The news and obituaries can be found there, too.

Undoubtedly, the current fitful state of both the magazine and music industry contribute to this misfortune. Its detractors also point to its dated lay-out that fails to engage younger readers. I know I've disagreed publicly in the past about its policy of only printing positive record reviews. But it's not the remit of this editor to criticise. This is not about magazine rivalry. This plea is about the future welfare of the community as a whole.

Think about how many Canadian folk musicians and singers have benefited from its review policy? Too many to count. How many have appeared in its extensive features section over the past 60-odd years? Beats me, but I'd wager it's also significant.

And these articles are written by insightful writers who actually know a thing or two about folk music — its history, its traditions, its political significance, its cultural consequences. ... These writers spend a lifetime acquiring knowledge and polishing their craft. And it shows. The Internet may have a million and constructive uses but nurturing high-quality, intuitive music journalism ain't one of them. And who archives on the open Internet anyway?

Since the 1940s, *Sing Out!* has amassed an irreplaceable collection of folk music documents, books, periodicals, recordings and photographs — copies of which are available to researchers and its readers. The first print copy of Bob Dylan's *Blowing In The Wind* appeared initially on the pages of *Sing Out!* and its popularity spread from there. And we all know what happened next. For the folk world to lose such an archival resource would surely amount to art aficionados barred from the Louvre.

So what's to be done? The simplest thing, obviously, is to subscribe. But what about all you musicians out there that have benefitted from the career-boosting acknowledgements received from such a credible magazine? Surely, its payback time? A benefit or two would certainly go a long way to balancing the one-way compassion that has existed up until now. Sing out, why don't you!

— By Roddy Campbell

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## cover feature

48 . . . . Old Man Luedecke went to Nashville to record his new album *Tender* with celebrated mandolin and fiddle player Tim O'Brien. It has a lot to live up to considering his last two each won a Juno. Roddy Campbell reckons all his considerable talents remain intact.

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## quotable

"There is a reason he's Daniel Lanois. He's credible, so creative. When I did join Emmylou's band, that wasn't easy because I couldn't do what he does, and I didn't try to. I do what I can and I hoped that I got somewhat of a feel of what he created,"  
— Buddy Miller

"I would walk into Chester—couldn't afford to drive our bus—and use the computer at the convenience store to try to book gigs. And then walk back,"  
— Old Man Luedecke

"The English Folk Revival hasn't really touched me. It's not music I listen to and I go, 'Oh! Wow!' Shirley Collins I see regularly. She's like my grandma. But she knows as well as I do, I don't listen to her music. It's not my music, it's not my style,"  
— Sam Lee



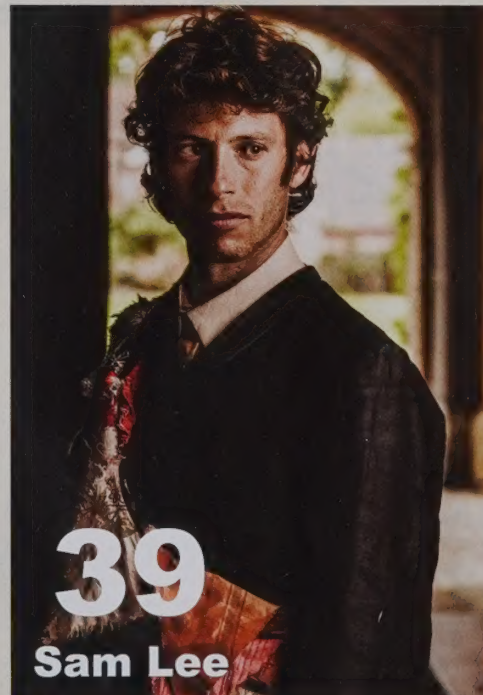
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## Amelia Curran's All-time Top 10

<b>Caracol</b> Shiver (Independent)
<b>The Dardenelles</b> The Dardenelles (Independent)
<b>Bob Dylan</b> Desire (Columbia)
<b>Ron Hynes</b> Get Back Change (Borealis)
<b>Daniel Lanois</b> Acadie (Warner Bros)
<b>Le Vent du Nord</b> Dans Les Airs (Borealis)
<b>Nick Lowe</b> The Convincer (Yep Roc Records)
<b>The Pogues</b> If I Should Fall From Grace (Warner Bros)
<b>Richard &amp; Linda Thompson</b> I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight (Island)
<b>Al Tuck</b> The New High Road of Song (Outs)

Amelia Curran's latest recording is Spectators, released by Six Shooter Records. Our feature on Amelia runs on page 45.

Amelia Curran

## fred's records top 5

<b>1. Amelia Curran</b> Spectators (Six Shooter)
<b>2. Tenors</b> Lead with Your Heart (Universal)
<b>3. City On The Coas</b> City On The Coas (Independent)
<b>4. Mumford &amp; Sons</b> Babel (Glassnote)
<b>5. Andrew O'Brien</b> Songs For Searchers (Independent)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5

Orchestra Baobab

## 10 Years Ago

<b>1. Neko Case</b> Blacklisted (Mint)
<b>2. Steve Earle</b> Sidetracks (E-squared)
<b>3. Solomon Burke</b> Don't Give Up On Me (Fat Possum)
<b>4. Orchestra Baobab</b> Specialists In All Styles (Nonesuch)
<b>5. Zubot And Dawson</b> Chicken Scratch (True North)
<b>6. Blind Boys of Alabama</b> Higher Ground (EMI)
<b>7. Tom Waits</b> Alice (EMI)
<b>8. Linda Thompson</b> Fashionably Late (Rounder)
<b>9. Thievery Corporation</b> The Richest Man In Babylon (ESL Music)
<b>10. Ryan Adams</b> Demolition (Lost Highway)

Compiled from all album sales on the Charts page in Penguin Eggs issue No. 16 published in the Winter of 2002.

## wfmfms top 10

<b>1. Head And The Heart</b> Head And The Heart (Independent)
<b>2. Blackie And The Rodeo Kings</b> Kings And Queens Deluxe Edition (F.U.M.)
<b>3. Amelia Curran</b> Spectators (Six Shooter)
<b>4. Jenn Grant</b> The Beautiful Wild (Six Shooter)
<b>5. Black Country Communion</b> Afterglow (Mascot)
<b>6. A.C. Newman</b> Shut Down the Streets (Matador Records)
<b>7. Mumford &amp; Sons</b> Babel (Glassnote)
<b>8. Mumford &amp; Sons</b> Rumour & Sigh (Glassnote)
<b>9. Danny Michel</b> Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me (Six Shooter)
<b>10. Whitehorse</b> The Fate Of The World Depends On This Kiss (Six Shooter)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival's Music Store, 203-Bannatyne Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2S 1A1



## highlife top 10

**Rodriguez**  
Searching For Sugar Man (Light In the Attic)

**Bob Dylan**  
Tempest (Columbia)

**Fatoumata Diawara**  
Fatou (World Circuit)

**Calexico**  
Algiers (Anti)

**Lee Fields**  
Faithful Man (Truth & Soul)

**Ondatropica**  
Ondatropica (Soundway)

**Staff Benda Bilili**  
Bouger Le Monde (Crammed)

**Soul Jazz Orchestra**  
Solidarity (Strut)

**Jim Byrnes**  
I Hear the Wind In the Wires (Black Hen)

**Patrick Watson**  
Adventures In Your Own Backyard (Secret City)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

## permanent records top 10

**Murdoch & Sparrow**  
Dominion Day (Murdoch & Sparrow)

**Whitehorse**  
The Fate Of the World Depends On This Kiss (Six Shooter)

**John Fullbright**  
From The Ground Up (Blue Dirt)

**Jimmy Cliff**  
Rebirth (Sun Power)

**Carolyn Mark**  
The Queen Of Victoria Island (Mint)

**Mark Knopfler**  
Privateering (Mercury)

**John Hiatt**  
Mystic Pinball (New West)

**Corb Lund**  
Cabin Fever (New West)

**Jenn Grant**  
The Beautiful Wild (Six Shooter)

**The Flatlanders**  
The Odessa Tapes (New West)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Permanent Records, 8126 Gateway Blvd. Edmonton, AB, T6E 4B1



Whitehorse



Fatoumata Diawara

## sillions top 10

- Bernard Adamus**  
No 2 (Distribution Select)
- Lisa Leblanc**  
Lisa Leblanc (Distribution Select)
- Mumford & Sons**  
Babel (Glassnote)
- Catherine Durand**  
Les murs blanc du Nord (Distribution Select)
- Various Artists**  
Douze Hommes Rapailés (Les Editions Ad Litteram Inc)
- Richard Desjardins**  
L'existoire (Distribution Select)
- Fred Pellerin**  
C'est un monde (Disques Tempête)
- The Toure-Raichel Collective**  
The Tel Aviv Session (Cumbancha)
- Fred Pellerin**  
Silence (Disques Tempête)
- Ballaké Sissoko & Vincent Segal**  
Chamber Music (Six Degrees)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Sillions, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

## soundscapes top 10

- Cold Specks**  
I Predict A Graceful Expulsion (Arts & Crafts)
- Michael Kiwanuka**  
Home Again (Polydor)
- Alabama Shakes**  
Boys & Girls (ATO)
- Great Lake Swimmers**  
New Wild Everywhere (Nettwerk)
- Patrick Watson**  
Adventures In Your Own Backyard (Secret City)
- Jack White**  
Blunderbuss (Third Man)
- Andre Williams & The Sadies**  
Night & Day (Outside/Yep Roc)
- Zeus**  
Busting Visions (Arts & Crafts)
- Kathleen Edwards**  
Voyageur (MapleMusic)
- Bahamas**  
Barchords (Brushfire)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

## ckua top 20

- Corb Lund**  
Cabin Fever (New West)
- Danny Michel**  
Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me (Six Shooter)
- Whitehorse**  
The Fate Of the World Depends On This Kiss (Six Shooter)
- Mark Knopfler**  
Privateering (Mercury)
- Maria Dunn**  
Piece By Piece (Independent)
- Jenn Grant**  
The Beautiful Wild (Six Shooter)
- John Wort Hannam**  
Brambles and Thorns (Borealis)
- David Byrne/St. Vincent**  
Love This Giant (4 AD)
- Various Artists**  
Calgary Folk Music Festival Sampler 2012 (Independent)
- Tift Merritt**  
Traveling Alone (Yep Roc)
- Chilly Gonzales**  
Solo Piano II (Arts & Crafts)
- Various Artists**  
First Came Memphis Minnie (Stony Plain)
- Brandi Carlile**  
Bear Creek (Columbia)
- Mumford & Sons**  
Babel (Glassnote)
- Calexico**  
Algiers (Anti)
- Carolyn Mark**  
The Queen Of Victoria Island (Mint)
- Van Morrison**  
Born To Sing: No Plan B (Exile)
- Jason Collett**  
Reckon (Arts & Crafts)
- Bonnie Raitt**  
Slipstream (Redwing)
- Ry Cooder**  
Election Special (Nonesuch)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music dics on CKUA radio - www.ckua.org - throughout August, September and October.



Bonnie Raitt



# News•Gossip•Rumour•Tattle

**Dave Gunning's** new album *No More Pennies* got more media attention this fall than he ever expected. Not because of the great music inside but for the images on the CD artwork—of the soon-disappearing Canadian penny, writes Sandy MacDonald.

Turns out the Royal Canadian Mint took exception to the unlicensed depiction of the little copper, which it says contravened copyright rules. The album's cover photo shows Gunning, coffee mug in hand, with a smattering of change on the counter. There's also creative use of the penny image on the back cover and inside.

"I contacted the mint right away," says Gunning, who had never heard of royalty issues around the coin. "But was terrified because I had already manufactured 2,000 copies of the album." The loss of the run would cost the independent musician thousands of dollars and the inconvenience of having no product at his shows.

But the mint relented and agreed Gunning could sell his original run of CDs. But he'd still owe \$1,200 in copyright royalties for use of the penny image. With frustration setting in, Gunning came up with a novel idea.

"I decided I'd pay the fee in pennies."

Gunning went on a Halifax radio station and mentioned he'd pay the royalties in actual pennies—300 kilograms of metal coins—and his uncle would deliver the

coins to the mint.

Fans began to bring their pennies to his shows by the pocketful to donate.

"We'd thought we'd have some fun with this. And pay it forward to the IWK Hospital, the Halifax children's hospital."

The story quickly caught fire and was soon in every major newspaper, TV and radio station in the Maritimes. Gunning says he wasn't looking for the publicity and was feeling uncomfortable with the angle of the story—poor struggling musician taking on the powerful Royal Canadian Mint.

"Getting lost in that story was how hard we'd worked to put out this record."

Gunning finally fired off a letter to the mint, copied it to the **Prime Minister** and others asking for a resolution and suggested they turn this into a good news story for everyone.

The Mint finally responded, agreed to waive the fees for the life of the project and allowed Gunning to move ahead. He still has the big bucket of pennies in his truck, heading for the hospital.

Wailin' Jenny's vocalist **Ruth Moody** appears on the new **Mark Knopfler** double album *Privateering*. She also joined the former **Dire Straits** guitarist as he opened for **Bob Dylan** on several dates of his recent North American tour. Moody largely sang harmony on such songs as *Kingdom of*

*Gold, Redbud Tree, Go, Love and Seattle*.

"She is on the very top level of singers and songwriters out there and I can't take her off my jukebox," said Knopfler.

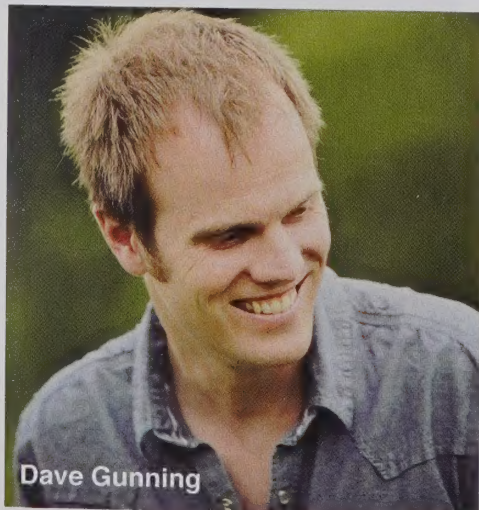
Other folk musicians in Knopfler's touring band include former **Battlefield Band** fiddler **John McCusker** and **Capercaillie** whistle, flute and uilleann piper **Michael McGoldrick**.



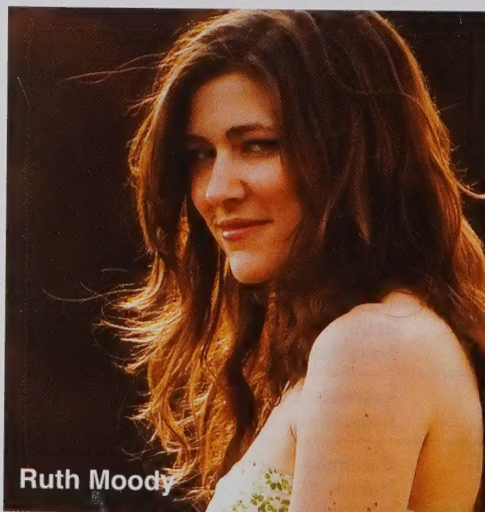
Ottawa Valley fiddler April Verch's new recording will feature two legendary bluegrass guests. Vocalist **Mac Wiseman** and banjo player **Sammy Shelor** will appear on her ninth as-yet-unnamed disc, set for release in, of course, April. Wiseman, who performed with the likes of **Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys** and enjoyed such hit singles as *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* and *Jimmy Brown the Newsboy*, sings on Verch's *The Only One*, and the Charlie Moore classic *My Home in the Sky*. Shelor, who fronts the **Lonesome River Band** and has won the International Bluegrass Association's Best Banjo Player award on five occasions, contributes two bluegrass tunes, *That Was Before I Met You* and *The Only One*, as well as an old-time instrumental medley, *Big Eared Mule/Davey Davey/Folding Down the Sheets*. Verch's last disc was *That's How We Run* released in 2011.



Changes in personnel are afoot for the



Dave Gunning



Ruth Moody



April Verch



mighty **Oysterband** [see *P.E. No. 52*]. Cello, mandolin, bass and harmonium player **Ray Chopper** is set to leave the band at the end of their current U.K. tour with **June Tabor**. Chopper, who lives in Sweden, intends to pursue a solo career. He released his debut album, *Love War & Death By Hanging*, in 2010. Oysterband's collaboration with **June Tabor** on the album *Ragged Kingdom* earned them four BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards plus album of the year honours from *fRoots* magazine. And due to their busy schedule and personnel shuffle, the band will plan their next Big Session Festival for 2014. Last year it featured the likes of **Eddi Reader**, **Martin Simpson** and **Chumbawamba**.



**Bellowhead** fans can hear the U.K. band's entire new album, their fourth, *Broadside*, streamed exclusively on *The Guardian* newspaper's website at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2012/oct/09/bellowhead-broadside-album-stream>. While released in the U.K. Oct. 15, through their own label Navigator, Nashville-based Compass Records released it in the U.S. and Canada Oct. 30. *Broadside* has already made *fRoots* magazine's Top 10 albums of the year list. The actual Album of the Year will be announced on BBC Radio 3 in a special broadcast Dec. 7.



Good news for fans of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. For the first time in many years, the festival is now almost free of debt. While it still owes a small amount of SO-CAN fees, those should be clear by the time the event rolls around at the city's panoramic Jericho Beach next summer, says artistic director **Linda Tanaka**. The inclusion of a

beer garden, more sponsorship and some astute booking appears to have turned Vancouver's fortunes around since Tanaka took over as AD in 2008. Founded in 1978, estimates suggest the annual event's debt once peaked as high as \$500,000. Tanaka has steadily erased the crippling red ink and in 2012 she was finally able to increase the artistic budget for the festival's 35th anniversary event.

"I think it showed up at the box office by doing that," she says. The likes of **Lucinda Williams**, **Ani DiFranco** and **Dan Mangan** headlined last summer's hooley.



Country-folk duo **The Civil Wars** cancelled their November concert series in the U.K. mid-tour owing to "internal discord and irreconcilable differences of ambition". The duo posted a message on Facebook that said they are "unable to continue as a touring entity at this time", though their statement expressed a desire to release new music in 2013.

*Barton Hollow*, the debut album by **Joy Williams** and **John Paul White**, was released in the U.S. last year to critical acclaim. It reached No. 10 in the *Billboard* chart and won Grammy awards for best country duo/group performance and best folk album. It has also been nominated for two Country Music Association awards.



A new 60-seat folk venue opened in Toronto in early September under the guidance of songwriters **Enoch Kent** and **Alex Sinclair**. The Wee Folk Club will run on the first and third Thursday of every month in the back room of The Imperial Pub, 54 Dundas Street East, Toronto. Each concert will start at 7:30 p.m. and the cover is \$10.

"We thought that some singers who are worth hearing are not being heard properly in some club environments—their performances are interrupted by wait staff delivering food and drink or discussing the amount on the tab.... We won't be having that," Kent wrote *Penguin Eggs*.

The format of the Wee Folk Club will include two performers per night. Each will perform a 25-minute solo spot in the first half and in the second they'll swap songs. "The emphasis here is on songs with stories in them. You know—folk songs."

**Aengus Finnan** and **Eve Goldberg** performed in front of a full house on opening night, Sept. 6. Others scheduled to perform include: Dec. 6, **Kevin & Samantha Kennedy** and **Enoch Kent**; Dec. 20, **Eve Goldberg** and **Greg Quill**; Jan. 3, **Allison Lupton**, **Ian Bell**, and **Geoff Somers**. Jan. 24, (a unique alternate date), **John Wort Hannam** and **Alex Sinclair**. For more information, go to: <http://theweefolkclub.wordpress.com/>



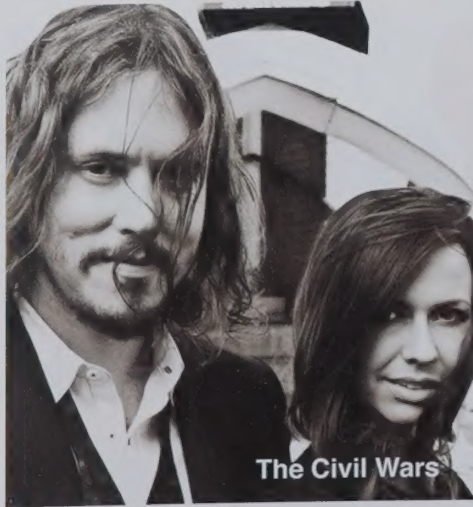
And talking of Alex Sinclair, he has just been elected president of the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals. He takes over from Scott Merrifield. And Sinclair's beautiful song *Magdalene MacGillvary* was recorded by **Laura Smith** for her new disc, *Safe Home Sweet Light*, set for release in April. It marks Smith's first recording of new material in almost 15 years and will feature both traditional as well as original songs in a traditional vein. Recorded and produced by **Paul Mills**, it features the likes of **Tony McManus**, **Emily Stam** and **David Woodhead**.



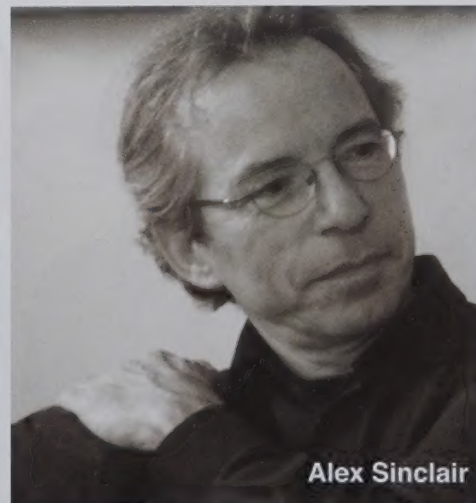
Executive director **Peter MacDonald** has left the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals



Linda Tanaka



The Civil Wars



Alex Sinclair



to take up a position with an Ottawa-based arts organization in the new year. MacDonald has held the position since 2008.

"I love the folk community and look forward to enjoying the fruits of the labours of our festivals, organizations and individuals from a new vantage point," said MacDonald.

The OCFF is the largest folk and roots music organization in Canada and is actively seeking MacDonald's replacement. The ideal candidate will receive a salary in the \$45,000 to \$51,000 range plus benefits. Those interested can find an application form and job requirements at [www.ocff.ca](http://www.ocff.ca)



The Toronto Symphony Orchestra and world music band **Sultans of String** are developing a live concert show to encourage young people to enjoy and play music. The week-long series of concerts, set for April 22-26, 2013, at Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, will feature a classical repertoire influenced by folk and world music traditions, as well as original Sultans of String songs from their upcoming symphony album. That as-yet-unnamed disc includes ukulele soloist **James Hill** and uilleann piper **Paddy Maloney** of **The Chieftains**. The Sultans' latest CD, *MOVE*, was recently nominated for four Canadian Folk Music Awards, including one for Producer of the Year for band founder **Chris McKhool**.



Retired Canadian senator, musician and composer **Tommy Banks** has formed a charity to fund affordable housing for the likes of musicians, actors, comedians and other live performers in the Edmonton, AB, area. Banks, who retired last December at the mandatory age of 75, has since created

the Tommy Banks Performing Arts Fund.

"The foundation's highest priority," wrote Banks in a press release, "is to support the creation of safe, affordable housing in Edmonton for a vibrant community of creative professionals who work, or have worked, in the performing arts... And to help it maintain and strengthen its traditional health by providing financial assistance that will encourage artists to continue living and creating art in the greater Edmonton area."

The next Banks fundraiser is the Dec. 6 Christmas Big Band Ball at Fort Edmonton, AB. (Tickets at [www.ticketweb.ca](http://www.ticketweb.ca))



CBC and CKUA radio host and Stony Plain Records owner **Holger Petersen** will provide the keynote speech at Toronto's Blues Summit Six held at the city's Delta Chelsea Hotel, Jan. 18-21, 2013. The bi-annual conference brings together national and international blues industry delegates. And it will coincide with the 16th annual Maple Blues Awards, to be held Jan. 21, at the nearby Koerner Hall. The Maple Blues Awards promote blues music across Canada, and recognize outstanding achievement in the field. This annual celebration of homegrown blues talent will be hosted by actor **Raoul Bhaneja**, who also fronts the young Canadian blues band **Raoul and The Big Time**. For tickets and more information, go to [www.torontobluesociety.com](http://www.torontobluesociety.com)



Back at the Delta Chelsea Hotel: it will host the 11th Winterfolk, Roots and Blues Festival, Feb 14-17. Alongside performances from the likes of **Ken and Chris Whiteley**, **David Essig**, **Tony Quarrington** and **Wendell Ferguson**, the festival will include several workshops and song circle

events. Winterfolk will also host a three-hour showcase at the North American Folk Alliance annual conference, Feb 20-24, at the same venue. For more information, please visit [www.winterfolk.com](http://www.winterfolk.com)



As our regular readers would have noticed in the Reviews section of the last issue, **The Bills** have just released *Yes Please*, their first album in eight years. "The Bills [have] wit, bounce and fire to spare," wrote our reviewer **Scott Lingley**. The Victoria-based band have rarely played live over the past four years as they all pursued individual projects.

Frye released a solo album, **Marc Atkinson** formed a jazz trio and **Adrian Dolan** and **Richard Moody** hired themselves out as session musicians to a variety of acts that ranged from **The Chieftains** to **Ridley Bent**.

"When 2012 rolled around we realized we'd better start playing and recording again or we might never make it happen."

The Bills hired local producer **Joby Baker** to make *Yes Please* and the process reinvigorated the band to the extent they've now planned a tour of Ontario in May. For more information, go to [www.thebills.ca](http://www.thebills.ca)



**The Paul Butterfield Blues Band** and **Albert King** are among the nominees for the 2013 induction into the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame. The bluesmen are among a list of 14 eclectic nominees that include **Randy Newman**, **Deep Purple** and **N.W.A.** Paul Butterfield Blues Band turned a generation of white kids onto the likes of **Muddy Waters** and **Howlin' Wolf**. Ace blues guitarist, King, inspired the likes of **Stevie Ray Vaughan** and **Eric Clapton**



The Bills



Albert King



# The Canadian Folk Music Awards 2012

The Fretless proved the only multiple winners at the eighth annual Canadian Folk Music Awards, which took place at the Imperial Theatre in Saint John, NB, on Nov. 17. The string quartet's innovative arrangements of Celtic and Canadian fiddle styles on their debut album *Waterbound* earned them Instrumental Group and Ensemble Of The Year Awards.

The event included live performances from Cindy Church and Susan Crowe, The Spinney Brothers, Genticorum, Cara Luft and Mike Stevens and Matt Andersen.

Local journalist Gerry Taylor received the Unsung Hero Of Folk Music Award. Taylor began writing about music for *The Saint John Telegraph-Journal* in 1958. Almost 55 years later, the newspaper still carries his half-page column.

The complete list of winners include:  
 Traditional Album of the Year: Metis Fiddler Quartet, *Northwest Voyage Nord Ouest*;  
 Contemporary Album of the Year: The Deep Dark Woods, *The Place I Left Behind*;  
 Children's Album of the Year: Henri Godo, *Chansons pour toutes sortes d'enfants*;  
 Traditional Singer of the Year: Lenka Lichtenberg, *Songs for the Breathing Walls*;  
 Contemporary Singer of the Year: Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark*;  
 Instrumental Solo Artist/Album of the Year: Trent Freeman, *Rock Paper Scissors*;  
 Instrumental Group of the Year: The Fretless, *Waterbound*;  
 Vocal Group of the Year: The Once, *Row Upon Row Of The People They Know*;  
 Ensemble of the Year: The Fretless, *Waterbound*;  
 Solo Artist of the Year: Michael Jerome Browne, *The Road Is Dark*;  
 English Songwriter of the Year: Catherine MacLellan, *Silhouette*;  
 French Songwriter of the Year: Mes Aïeux, *À l'aube du printemps*;  
 World Artist of the Year (Group): Sultans of String, *MOVE*;  
 New/Emerging Artist of the Year: Pharis & Jason Romero, *A Passing Glimpse*;  
 Producer of the Year: Rob Szabo, *A Natural Fact* (Steve Strongman);  
 Pushing the Boundaries: Sagapool, *Sagapool*;  
 Young Performer of the Year: Lucas Chaisson, *Growing Pains*.

All photos courtesy of the CFMAs and taken by Graham Lindsey and Paul Cunningham. Clockwise from the top: Lucas Chaisson, Rose Cousins, The Spinney Brothers, Mike Stevens and Matt Andersen, Metis Fiddler Quartet and Carla Luft.





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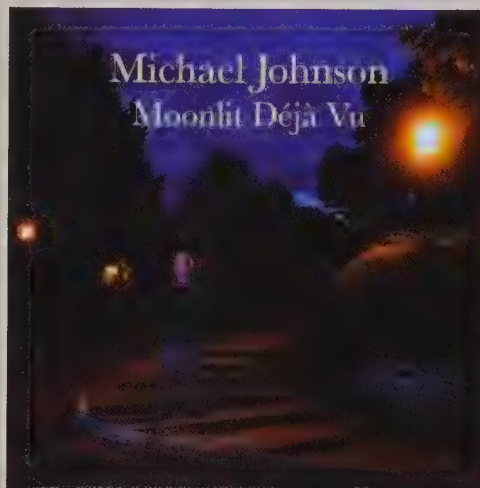
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The queen of urban folk with guests Buddy  
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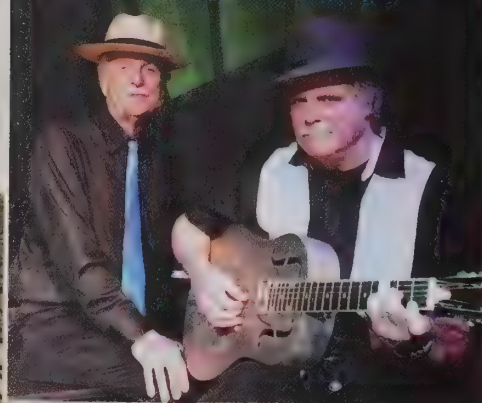
Michael Johnson  
Moonlit Déjà Vu



## MICHAEL JOHNSON MOONLIT DÉJÀ VU

The brilliant and powerful return  
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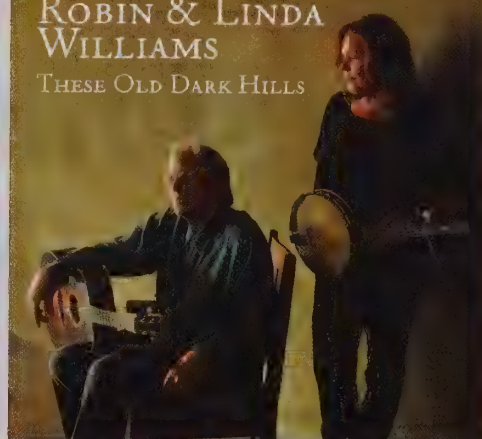
BUTCH THOMPSON & PAT DONOHUE  
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## PAT DONOHUE & BUTCH THOMPSON VICKSBURG BLUES

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ROBIN & LINDA  
WILLIAMS  
THESE OLD DARK HILLS



## ROBIN & LINDA WILLIAMS THESE OLD DARK HILLS

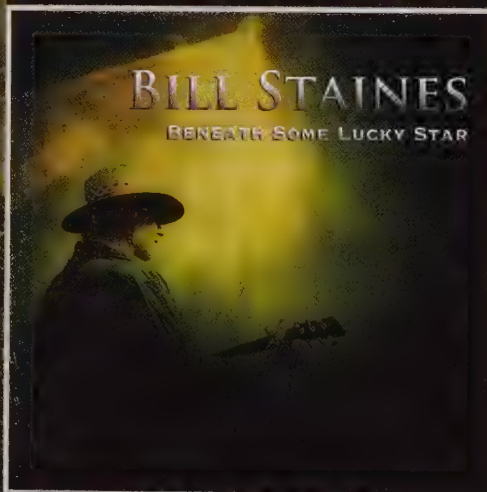
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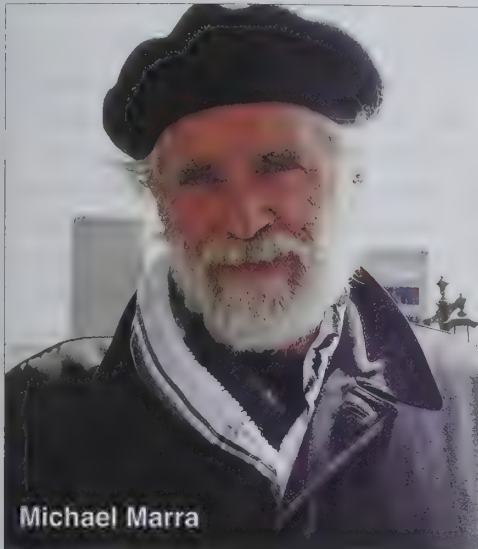
BILL STAINES  
BENEATH SOME LUCKY STAR



## BILL STAINES BENEATH SOME LUCKY STAR

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a rich collection of new instant Staines classics  
and interpretations.





Michael Marra

## Michael Marra 1952-2012

Michael Marra, writes Ken Hunt, was a man of letters, a sangster, actor and playwright in the Scots idiom. Like a twist on the children's joke address, his was Dundee, Tayside, Scotland, The World, The Universe. Illustrating that, *In Flagrant Delict* (delight punning on delicto), one of his collaborations with the Scottish makar and dramatist Liz Lochhead, reached Washington, DC, and Melbourne, Australia. His unofficial title of "the Bard of Dundee" came true in 2007 when Dundee University awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contribution to Dundee's cultural profile.

Marra was born on Feb. 17, 1952, in Dundee. Leaving school at 14, he seemed predestined for the menial. He escaped Dead End Street through words and music, passing through groups, beginning with Hen's Teeth in 1971, and establishing himself as a distinctively voiced local hero with his solo albums, *The Midas Touch* (1980) and *Gaels Blue* (1985).

His songs circumnavigated the fantastical yet true with *Schenectady Calling Peerie Willie Johnson* inspired by the guitarist picking up Eastern Seaboard radio in the Shetlands (on *Quintet*, 2007); with such might-have-happened, site-specific 'visiting' songs as *General Grant's Visit To Dundee* (*Gaels Blue*), *Mac Rebennack's Visit to Blairgowrie* (*Quintet*) and *Frida Kahlo's Visit To The Tay Bridge Bar* (*Post-Ed Sober*, 2002); and the socially engaged with *The Guernsey Kitchen Porter* (*Hard Cash*, 1990). He died on Oct. 23, 2012, in his home town.

## Raylene Rankin 1960-2012

Raylene Rankin, a key member of Cape Breton's award-winning Rankin Family—a band that sang in Gaelic and English—died Sept. 30 after a long fight with cancer. She was 52, writes Roddy Campbell.

Raylene Marguerite Rankin was born in Inverness, Cape Breton, one of 12 siblings born to Buddy and Kathleen Rankin. Raylene began singing in church but began playing at weddings, dances and céilidhs in the 1970s. After high school she earned a bachelor of law degree at the University of Dalhousie in Halifax, NS. While she was admitted to the bar in 1988, she continued to sing with Jimmy, John Morris, Cookie and Heather Rankin. Under the banner of The Rankin Family, they released their self-titled independent debut cassette in 1989. *Fare The Well Love*, a combination of original tunes and songs, followed a year later. The international EMI label would pick it up and re-release it in 1992. *Fare The Well Love* went on to sell 500,000 copies and the title track wound up on the Disney film *Into The West*.

Although The Rankin Family sang *An Innis Aigh* on The Chieftains' album *Fire In The Kitchen* (1998), after they recorded *Jimmy Mo Mhile Stòr* for the Irish band's *Tears Of Stone* (1999) the Rankins announced they would no longer perform together as each wanted to pursue their individual interests.

Raylene, Cookie and Heather sang on Carly Simon's *Bedroom Tapes* in 1999. But tragedy struck the following year when John Morris died after his truck plunged into the

icy Gulf of St. Lawrence. He was 40.

Raylene was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001; it would return in 2009 and 2011. However, she released two solo albums, *Lambs In Spring* (2004) and *All The Diamonds* (2011). The Rankin Family would reunite in 2007 and release two more albums, *Reunion* (2007) and *These Are The Moments* (2009). All in all, The Rankin Family sold more than two million records and won six Junos and 15 East Coast Music Awards. They clearly popularized Cape Breton's traditional music. Raylene Rankin is survived by her husband, Colin Anderson, and their son, Alexander.

## Don Snider 1953-2012

Don Snider, production manager at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival for the past 22 years, died Nov. 12 in Edmonton, AB, of cancer. He was 59, writes Roddy Campbell.

Snider grew up in Edmonton and started at the festival in 1991. He would oversee major changes to the site in the city's Gallagher Park, including the addition of more session stages, video screens, a larger mainstage and expanded facilities (water, beer gardens, green initiatives...).

"His people skills were magnificent," says festival producer Terry Wickham. "You always felt safe in Don's hands. He always had your back. There were no major injuries during Don's time here."

Snider also handled production duties for Edmonton's Street Performers Festival, First Night and worked national tours for the likes of country superstar George Strait.



Raylene Rankin



Don Snider





## Wool on Wolves

What can you say about Edmonton's own Wool on Wolves, except that these fellas are one-hundred-per-cent, bona fide great guys—all of them buirdly, earnest and fine. They have seven degrees between the five of them and, no lies, a geophysicist amongst their ranks. These are musicians even my mom wouldn't mind me dating.

And there are titillating things on the horizon for these wooly wolves. A new album, the independent release *Measures of Progress*, due out Nov. 13, for one. A musical frolic across our enormous nation to follow, and finally, the addition of a sixth touring member (yet another strapping lad!). The addition of drummer Aidan Buckland (Renny Wilson, Jessica Jalbert, The Whitsundays) on the road will ensure that Kevin George, Wool on Wolves' current skin slapper, can return to his instrument of choice.

"He basically became the drummer when we started the band because he had a drum kit," regales bassist Brody Irvine, "but he came to the realization that his real passion was in guitar playing, and doing more melodic stuff rather than rhythm." If all goes well, Wool on Wolves will no longer be a quintet but a sextet. Fitting.

*Measures of Progress* is an easily digestible 43 minutes, and a slight departure from their first full-length effort, 2010's *Grey*

*Matter*.

"A lot of *Grey Matter* was stuff that Tom wrote independently, just with his guitar ... but the more we played together, the more we started writing songs with more of a collective mindset. So, sonically, they are a bit different," explains Irvine. The difference in *Measures of Progress* expresses itself as maturity—there's a new fullness and a complexity there, which also might have something to do with the proddings of producer Paul Arnusch (The Faunts) and engineer Nik Kozub (Shout Out Out Out Out). But the difference is also in gumption—the band dares to take some experimental leaps, bleeding out psychedelic jams (*Be The Change*), and even a little bit of classic rrrrawk (*Broken Pictures*)—lambs straying from the shepherd of their folk rock roots. But not to worry, Miz Bo Peep is still there to keep them in line every once in a while, with lovely spatters of banjo, strings and poetry garnishing the songs right when they're needed most.

This is a band of best friends who, until recently, lived together in the same house. In this house, I kid you not, was a blanket embroidered with their collective smiling faces, which lay casually atop the sofa. They write their music democratically, they split the considerable workload equally (remember, Wool on Wolves have funded and self-released all their recordings to date, truly no small feat), and according to Irvine, above music, above everything, "the

friendship is what matters most."

If this makes you want to throw a little, fine. Problem is, I suspect these gents are sincere, and it makes this author's prairie-born heart swell a little. If this August's performance at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival is any indication (think writhing mass of screaming fans all the way up the hill), Irvine and his band mates will share the sweetest thing of all: a toast to success between best friends. Not all of us can boast that, eh?

— By Maghan Campbell

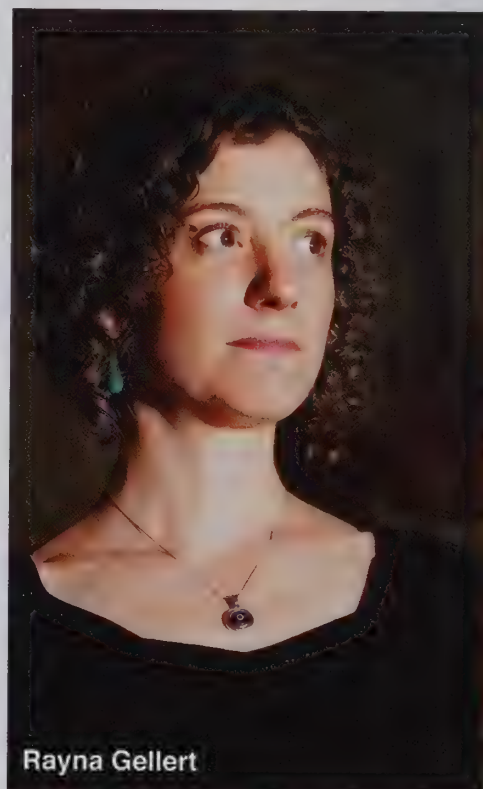
## Rayna Gellert

"I don't think of myself as a singer," Rayna Gellert says modestly. "I see myself as an instrumentalist but I wanted to push the boundaries and try something different to expand my musical horizons."

Gellert is talking about *Old Light*, her first album as a singer/songwriter. She's made records showcasing her fiddling prowess but says this is the first time she's made an album that realizes her personal creative vision.

"Like the other albums I've made, it was a collaborative process, but this time I was calling the shots. It's me saying what I want to say, in the way I want to say it, which is both satisfying and scary."

Gellert is one of the best fiddlers in



Rayna Gellert



bluegrass and old-time music, although she grew up playing classical violin. "I was obsessed with folk and old-time music and grew up surrounded by it," Gellert recalls. "My dad, Dan Gellert (a famous folk fiddler and banjo player) is a massive influence, of course, but I was intimidated by his playing. He didn't do classical though, so I did. When I moved away from home, I immersed myself in the folk world and started learning fiddle tunes. I grew up in Indiana but went to college in South Carolina, a place where a lot of old-time music originated. It was a significant move. I needed some space from my family in order to start playing what I wanted to play."

Gellert's transition to folk was immediately successful. She played square dances, taught fiddle workshops and joined The Freight Hoppers. After meeting mandolin player KC Groves, she was asked to join the all-woman old-time music group Uncle Earl. She stayed with them for six years and two albums. She's also played and recorded with Robyn Hitchcock, Sara Watkins, Loudon Wainwright III and ex-Led Zep bassist John Paul Jones, and made two solo fiddle albums. She contributed a few of her own compositions to Uncle Earl's repertoire but they were more playful.

The songs on *Old Light* are more serious and emotional. Like all great singer/songwriters, Gellert twists folk music into interesting new shapes that manage to sound both timeless and contemporary.

"I wasn't aiming for anything too specific," she says, "other than making the songs as evocative as possible."

Despite the long production process, *Old Light* flows smoothly, taking a realistic look at childhood and the process of growing up. The stately tempos and Nathan Salsburg's poignant guitar work support Gellert's plainspoken poetry and warm, emotional vocals. Her singing is perfectly balanced between hope and weariness; even when she's singing about love, she seems close to tears.

"A lot of my favourite music is dark," Gellert says. "Many of the most memorable songs from my childhood are either very grim or very sad. I've recorded plenty of joyful fiddle tunes, so it feels good to document another aspect of my musical personality."

— By J. poet



## Ashelin

According to the 2011 census conducted by Statistics Canada, the average number of children in a Canadian family is 1.8. This is not great news for aficionados of family bands; those magical entities of kith and kin, characterized by the musical precision and haunting blood harmonies that evolve from years of playing together. Thankfully, there are still some people out there who defy statistics. Kaliyan, Cassy, Joesie, Thea and Shaelin, are the talented and lovely daughters of Ted and Susie Palmer. The family lives in Conception Bay South, NL, and music has always been a focal point of family life.

"Dad worked as a mechanic," says Kaliyan. "He got Sundays off, so on Sunday afternoon he would haul out his 12-string Washburn and we would all sing songs together. I suppose that's where it all started."

They began performing in 1997, travelling to local festivals around the island, playing traditional music and developing their vocal and instrumental skills under the name The Palmer Sisters. Eventually, they started writing their own songs, and changed their name to Ashelin; an Irish female name which reflects the roots of their music, and which is also an anagram of Shaelin, the name of the youngest Palmer sibling.

At the 2009 East Coast Music Awards in Corner Brook, NL, they met and became

fast friends with Al Strickland, a veteran music producer and engineer based in Halifax. He fell in love with the group and offered to work with them in the studio. He brought Grammy-winning producer George Massenburg into the project, and their debut album *The Road Not Taken* was released in 2010. The group juggled school and work to accommodate as much touring as possible. They have performed throughout Canada, New England, Ireland, and recently represented Newfoundland at the Festival of Nations at Dollywood. "We played a lot of Newfoundland traditional music and talked about our culture and our dialect," says Kaliyan. "We never got to meet Dolly, we missed her," laughs Joesie. "But she did send us a postcard and wrote us a message."

For many years, the sisters' parents were heavily involved in organizing their performances. No longer. The girls do 100 per cent of the work themselves, handling logistics, rehearsing, scheduling, interviews, even income tax and work visas. "I graduated with my business degree in 2010," states Kaliyan. "Cassy is also doing business, Joesie is in music school at Memorial, and Thea is doing a science degree. Shaelin is still in school. I guess you could say I handle most of our administrative stuff. I enjoy it, and I don't really see myself in an office."

Looking towards the future, they have decided to take a year off from touring in



order to concentrate on developing material for their sophomore album. They also want to cultivate their educational and career interests, at least for now, but are torn between practicality and passion. “The hardest thing,” says Thea, “is that we’re at a point now where we’re all in school and that’s what we have to do in order to have the freedom to do music, but ultimately that is what we want to do—music.” Perhaps as the world becomes acquainted with the infectious sounds of Ashelin, they might be able to choose the road not taken after all.

— By Jean Hewson

## Zhambai Trio

In the Shona language of Zimbabwe the word zhambai translates as scream—not a cry of pain or alarm but of joy and exultation. And that’s what dancers worked into a near trance-like state by the infectious traditional rhythms and interlocking melodies of the Zhambai Trio are liable to do.

The Vancouver-based band is comprised of multi-instrumentalists Kurai Mubaiwa and Curtis Andrews, and percussionist Navarro Franco. They came together a couple of years ago to perform the music Mubaiwa grew up with and played in Zimbabwe before he moved to Canada. Its primary focus is the extraordinarily versatile *mbira*.

“We play the *mbira dza vadzimu*—the

*mbira* of the ancestors—a necessary distinction from other instruments labelled as thumb piano and kalimba,” says Andrews. “It has a history in Shona culture that goes back several hundred years, some say 700 to 1,000 years. It’s essentially a spiritual instrument in traditional circles—used to invite states of trance for certain members of a community during ceremonies.”

“This trance state isn’t possible otherwise, as the ancestor spirits enjoy this music and will only come when the *mbira* and their favourite songs are present. As with many aspects of traditional society, the *mbira* was demonized and labelled as pagan with the spread of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Many were burned, and people turned their back on traditional beliefs. *Mbira* players were stigmatized.”

Thomas Mapfumo revived interest in the *mbira* during and after Zimbabwe’s struggle for independence in the ’70s, adapting *mbira* melodies for guitar, and eventually using the ancestral instrument in his bands. “This paved the way for others to use *mbira* in a similar manner and now it is found in many contexts, playing new forms of rhythm, melody and harmony.”

The Zhambai Trio’s rhythms and chants are anchored by the *hosho* maracas played by Franco. “A specific species of gourd is dried and hollowed out and seeds are inserted,” Andrews explains. “It’s indispensable for a complete *mbira* experience, and is the timekeeper for the musicians. A

traditional saying says that *mbira* without *hosho* is like *sadza*, a food staple, without *nyama*, meat.”

The band also features the marimba, which reached Zimbabwe some 50 years ago. The harmonies—both instrumental and vocal—are a mix of traditional unison, octaves, and fifths plus some thirds. “Having thirds isn’t typical by any means, and some purists will look down on it. But it sounds good to us and is something fresh, so we do it.”

With its compelling, complex and joyous music that draws on ancient roots and more contemporary sounds, the Zhambai Trio has become very popular around B.C., and earlier this year released a debut album, *Tambanavo (Dance With Them)*. The tracks are a mix of traditional and newly composed material by Mubaiwa.

“Kurai is a ball of creative energy. He comes to me and Navarro with the words and arrangements of the vocals pre-set and we are happy to learn them from him and allow his creativity to flourish. There are not many *mbira* players like him in Zimbabwe—or anywhere else, for that matter.”

— By Tony Montague

## Ralph Boyd Johnson

If Calgary’s roots scene ever had a sacred house, a good argument could be made for the three-storey, red-brick abode on 9th Street in the city’s southwest.

A decade ago, it was the living space of Calgary-based singer/songwriter Ralph Boyd Johnson and numerous other musicians, including Johnson’s mentor and friend, the legendary Billy Cowsill.

“It’s a point of musical history in Calgary,” explains Johnson, sipping a beer at one of his favourite musical haunts, Mikey’s Juke Joint. “Billy Cowsill lived and died in the house. He died in the back of the house.”

So it’s not surprising that Cowsill, one-time 1960s teen heartthrob of the family band that *The Partridge Family* was modelled after, haunts much of 1723 9 Street SW, Johnson’s stunning sophomore disc that pays tribute to his years spent at the house.



Zhambai Trio



Two of the songs—*The Legend of Wild Billy C* and *Bill's Pills*—are about Cowsill directly. It also includes the singer/songwriter's final two co-writes—*Adios Santa Rosa* and *Foot of the Throne*—and a version of Cowsill's own *Vagabond*. The album is dedicated to him with a reverent "Thanks Billy for the Music, the Schoolin' and the HEART" quote on the back cover.

Cowsill died in 2006 at the age of 58, firmly established as one of Western Canada's most iconic roots musicians through stints with The Blue Shadows and The Co-Dependents. But in his final years he was at the centre of a makeshift musical community made up of characters with great names like Back Alley John, Mickey Joy and James H. that would hang out, drink and occasionally scrap at 1723 9th Street.

"This particular record is about what was happening in that era," Johnson says. "I was just very fortunate to be there and to be able to get some co-writes with Billy. It was just a magical time."

Backed by the Inner City Outlaws, 1723 9th Street SW acts as a 10-song revue of roots-rock styles and showcases Johnson's command of songcraft. From the Tex-Mex kick

of *Adios Santa Rosa* to the joyful reggae lilt of *Blue Bird* to the Tom Waits-inspired, spoken-word jolt of *Ol' Black Crow*, the album certainly has an air of celebration to it.

But the songs were actually completed six years ago. They were shelved at least partially due to Johnson's sadness over the death of his friend.

"At first when Bill passed away, I just kind of clammed up a bit," he said. "People would come up to you and ask, 'How are you?' because we were all close. You'd have to reassure them you were OK and then ask, 'Well, how are you?'. I wasn't into that. It took too much energy. I didn't play music for a few years. Then time just slipped away."

But Johnson thinks the time is right to let the music loose to the world and is planning a series of CD release parties with the Inner City Outlaws. It's his first album since 2002's *Dyin' to Go*, which was produced by Cowsill.

Johnson sees the legacy of that period in Calgary's roots scene, from 2002 to 2006, as long overdue for some celebration. Meanwhile, the house itself narrowly escaped destruction a few years back. It's

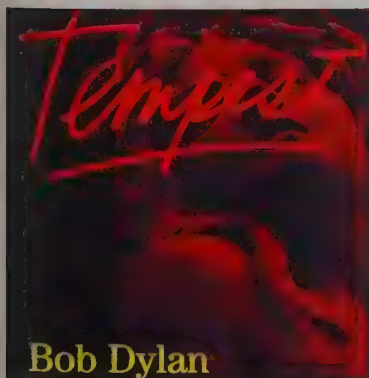
been lovingly refurbished and is now as sturdy as the musical legacy it spawned.

"These songs are about a time and a place and a kind of synergy," Johnson says. "I loved it. If I could re-loop I'd live in that loop for the rest of my life."

— By Eric Volmer



## Win Bob Dylan's latest CD, *Tempest*



As spirited and vigorous an album as Dylan's made in a long, long time, this *Tempest*. He sings about the Titanic, the War of 1812 and even lifts lyrics from the folk standards *Barbara Allen* and *Gypsy Davy*. Consider this: the Celtic-flecked title track runs nearly 14 minutes and has 45 verses. There's even a sentimental tribute to John Lennon. But as the title of this disc suggests, it's also one of Dylan's angriest albums. And nobody does angry better than the

man. Critical consensus appears to consider *Tempest* an album to behold.

And the good people at Columbia Records have provided us with six copies. To win one, answer the following questions correctly and email them to [penguineggs@shaw.ca](mailto:penguineggs@shaw.ca). Put Bob Dylan Contest as the subject. Please include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your prize. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

**Q. On his song *Highlands*, which Canadian does Dylan name-check?**

**Q. Emmylou Harris called *It's Not Dark Yet* the greatest song ever about growing old. Who produced it?**

**Q. The melody of *Blowin' In the Wind* is borrowed from which old spiritual?**

Answers to the Amadou and Mariam Folila contest are: Q1: Away From The Light Of Day. Q2: K'Naan. Q3: The 2006 FIFA World

Cup. And the winners are: Peter Smith, Pickering, ON; Ashley Smart, Edmonton, AB; John Peter, Georgetown, ON; Mary

Boudreau, Dartmouth, NS; James Entwistle, Calgary, AB; Stephen Patrick Lewis, San Francisco, CA.



# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

## CRITICS' FAVOURITE NEW DISCOVERIES OF 2012



Rose Cousins

### Albums of the Year for 2012

1. Rose Cousins  
*We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music)
2. Del Barber  
*Headwaters* (Six Shooter Records)
3. Dave Gunning  
*No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music)
4. Maria Dunn  
*Piece By Piece* (Independent)  
Danny Michel and the Benque Players,  
*Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter Records)
6. Old Man Luedecke  
*Tender Is The Night* (True North Records)  
Jory Nash  
*Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records)
8. Carolina Chocolate Drops  
*Leaving Eden* (Nonesuch)  
Leonard Cohen  
*Old Ideas* (Columbia Records)  
Le Vent Du Nord  
*Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis Records)

### New Discoveries of 2012

1. Cold Specks
2. Sam Lee

Historically the annual *Penguin Eggs* poll has run in the Spring issue. But March seemed so far away from the traditional time critics take stock of the memorable records created over the course of a year. And so to remain more current we made the switch. Besides, with Christmas just around the corner there are now pages of suggestions for stocking stuffers.

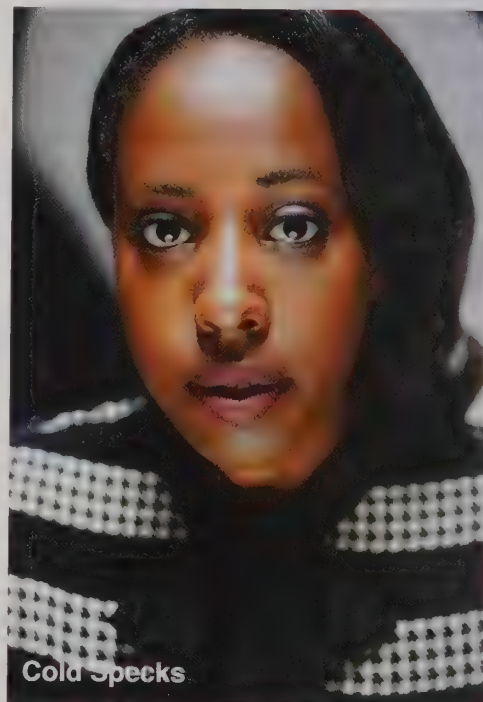
More than 50 individuals with an acute knowledge of what's current in the folk, roots and world music community in Canada participated in this our 12th poll. And when the dust settled P.E.I.-based Rose Cousins's *We Have Made A Spark* was given the nod as Album of the Year by a single vote over Del Barber's *Headwaters*. Sandy MacDonald wrote a wonderful, in-depth feature about the making of Cousins's recording in *Penguin Eggs* No. 54. He described the album as "beautiful", "haunting", "melancholy" and "stunning".

Canadian singer/songwriters clearly dominated this year's list, taking nine out of 10 places. Only the wonderful American string band Carolina Chocolate Drops halted an otherwise national sweep.

With few exceptions over the years, the New Discoveries category has always produced a close contest. In 2012, though, Etobicoke, ON's, Cold Specks won handily. Inspired by the southern field recordings of Alan Lomax, her debut album *I Predict A Graceful Explosion* garnered widespread critical acclaim. Yet the disparity of our critics' other choices is so great this year we couldn't list a third place.

As in years past, we asked participants to list their favourite 10 recordings released in Canada in 2012. Every nomination received one point. The winner gathered the most. For the New Discoveries category, we asked for three nominations. A huge thanks, then, to all who kindly participated. And a hearty congratulations to our winners. In the following pages, you can see how our judges voted. Now go out and discover how wonderful these recordings really are.

— Roddy Campbell



Cold Specks

### Past Album of the Year Winners

- 2011: Gillian Welch, *The Harrow & the Harvest* (Acony)
- 2010: Lynn Miles, *Fall For Beauty* (True North Records)
- 2009: Jory Nash, *New Blue Day* (Independent)
- 2008: Fred Eaglesmith, *Tinderbox* (A Major Label)
- 2007: Alison Krauss & Robert Plant, *Raising Sand* (Rounder)
- 2006: Bob Dylan, *Modern Times* (Columbia)
- 2005: Lynn Miles, *Love Sweet Love* (True North)
- 2004: David Francey, *The Waking Hour* (Laker Music)
- 2003: David Francey, *Skating Rink* (Laker Music)
- 2002: Harry Manx, *Wise And Otherwise* (NorthernBluest)
- 2001: David Francey, *Far End of Summer* (Laker Music)

### Past New Discovery Winners

- 2011: The Barr Brothers, Carrie Elkin, Pokey LaFarge, New Country Rehab
- 2010: The Once
- 2009: Kate Reid
- 2008: Amelia Curran
- 2007: Little Miss Higgins, Seth Lakeman, Catherine MacLellan
- 2006: Crooked Still
- 2005: Ridley Bent, House of Doc
- 2004: Fiamma Fumana
- 2003: Rae Spoon





2002: Ruthie Foster, Kathleen Edwards

2001: Harry Manx

## Honorable Mentions 2012

Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (eOne)

Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia)

Kathleen Edwards, *Voyageur* (MapleMusic)

Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch)

Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass)

Linda McRae, *Rough Edges & Ragged Hearts* (42RPM)

Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes & Truckstops* (Last Gang Records)

Whitehorse, *The Fate Of The World Depends On This Kiss* (Six Shooter)

**Debbie Atkinson:** Festival manager of Festival of Small Halls, Prince Edward Island: Meaghan Blanchard, *Chasin' Lonely Again* (Independent); Tim Chaisson, *The Other Side* (Bear River Music); Dennis Ellsworth, *Dusk Dreams* (Independent); Ennis, *The Fortunate Ones* (Independent); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee

House of Music); Dave Gunning, *Tribute to John Allan Cameron* (Wee House of Music); Dylan Guthro, *All That's True* (Wee House); Catherine MacLellan, *Silhouette* (True North Music); Sprag Session, *Sprag Session* (Independent); Ten Strings and A GoatSkin, *TRI* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Ashelin, Dylan Guthro, Sprag Session

**Yves Bernard:** Journalist, *Le Devoir*, Radio host, CIBL-FM, CKIN-FM: Angelo Finaldi, *Desoriented Voyage* (Artic); A Tribe Called Red, *A Tribe Called Red* (Soundcloud.com); Daniela Nardi, *Daniela Nardi's Espresso Manifesto – the Songs of Paolo Conte* (Independent); Gadji-Gadjo, *La folle allure* (Elephant Records); The Lemon Bucket Orchestra, *Lume, Lume* (Independent); Niyaz, *Sumud* (Independent); Roberto López Afro Colombian Jazz Orchestra, *Azul* (Curura Musique); Zal Sissokho et Buntalo, *Le partage* (Disques Nuits d'Afrique); Le Vent Du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis); Vishten, *Mozaik* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Canailles, Color Violeta, Taafé Fanga

**Allison Brock:** Independent producer and radio host; host of *Widecut Country* on CKUA; programmer, Americana & Roots channels for Stingray Digital in U.S. and CBC; reviewer for *Canadian Cowboy Country* magazine: Brandi Carlisle, *Bear Creek* (Columbia); Rodney Crowell, *KIN* (Vanguard); Iris DeMent, *Sing The Delta* (Red Eye); Justin Townes Earl, *Nothing's Gonna Change The Way You Feel About Me Now* (Bloodshot); John Fullbright, *From The Ground Up* (Blue Dirt Records); Jimmy LaFave, *Depending On The Dis-*

*tance* (Music Road Records); Jim Lauderdale, *Carolina Moonrise* (Sky Crunch Records); Linda McRae, *Rough Edges & Ragged Hearts* (42RPM); Darrell Scott, *Long Ride Home* (Full Light Records); Ian Tyson, *Raven Singer* (Stony Plain)

**New Discoveries:** Derek Hoke, John Fullbright, Belle Starr

**Allison Brown:** CJAM 99.1fm Windsor/Detroit, *Border City Roots* Mondays from 5-6 p.m. [www.chrwradio.com](http://www.chrwradio.com): Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside); Nancy Dutra, *Time Will Tell* (Independent); Fred Eaglesmith, *6 Volts* (Independent); Kelly Hogan, *I Like To Keep Myself In Pain* (Anti-); The Jimmyriggers, *I Stand In The Weeds* (Independent); Manitoba Hal, *Flirting With Mermaids* (Independent); Samantha Martin & The Haggard, *Samantha Martin & The Haggard* (Dollartone Records); Linda McRae, *Rough Edges and Ragged Hearts* (42RPM); Laura Repo, *Get Yourself Home* (RepoGirl); Pharis & Jason Romero, *A Passing Glimpse* (Lula Records)

**New Discovery:** The Blackwood Two, Richard Garvey, Uncle Dan Henshall

**Roddy Campbell:** Editor and publisher, *Penguin Eggs*: Alabama Shakes, *Boys And Girls* (ATO); Antonio Castrignanó, *Mara la Fatia* (Felmay); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Independent); Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia); Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch); Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass Records); King Charles, *LoveBlood* (Island); Sam Lee, *Ground Of Its Own* (Nest Collective); Sprag Session, *Sprag Session* (Independent); Trampled By Turtles, *Stars and Satellites* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** Antonio Castrignanó, Good For Grapes, Sam Lee





# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

**Kerry Clarke:** Artistic director, Calgary Folk Music Festival and host, *Alternative to What?* on CJSW 90.9 FM: Red Baraat, *Chaal Baby* (Jaro Records/Harmonia Mundi); Andrew Bird, *Break It Yourself* (Bella Union); Cold Specks, *Predict A Graceful Expulsion* (Arts and Crafts); Dirty Three, *Toward the Low Sun* (Drag City); Felice Brothers, *God Bless You Amigo* (Fat Possum); First Aid Kit, *The Lion's Roar* (Wichita Recordings/Jagadamba Records); Great Lake Swimmers, *New Wild Everywhere* (Nettwerk); John K. Samson, *Providential* (Epitaph); Staff Benda Bilili, *Bouger le Monde* (Crammed); Sharon Van Etten, *Tramp* (Jagjaguwar)

**New Discoveries:** Blitz the Ambassador, Debo Band, Rodriguez

**Steve Clarke:** Host, *Acoustic Planet*, CHES Radio, Erin, ON: Ben Bedford, *What We Lost* (Waterbug Records); Annabelle Chvostek, *Rise* (Borealis); Fred Eaglesmith, *6 Volts* (Independent); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); John Wort Hannam, *Brambles And Thorns* (Borealis); Danny Marks, *A Friend In The Blues* (Independent); The Honey Dewdrops, *Silver Lining* (Independent); Jimmy LaFave, *Depending on the Distance* (Music Road Records); Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes & Truckstops* (Last Gang Records); The Dardanelles, *The Eastern Light* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Bob Arden, Ross Douglas, Nancy Dutra

**François Côté:** Ex-artistic director, Deep Roots Music Festival (2005-09): Fiona Apple, *The Idler Wheel...* (Epic); Andrew Bird, *Break It Yourself* (Mom+Pop Music); Bowerbirds, *The Clearing* (Dead Oceans); Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Columbia); Amelia Curran, *Spectators* (Six Shooter); Father John Misty, *Fear Fun* (Sub Pop); Danny Michel & the Benque Players, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Anais Mitchell, *Young Man In America* (Wilderland); Punch Brothers, *Who's Feeling Young Now?* (Nonesuch); Patrick Watson, *Adventures In Your Own Backyard* (Secret City Records)

**New Discoveries:** Bowerbirds, Lisa Leblanc, Father John Misty

**Doug Cox:** Musician/producer, Vancouver Island MusicFest, Learnrootsmusic.com: Canailles, *Manger Du Bois* (Select); Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (E1); Trent Freeman, *Rock, Paper, Scissors* (Independent); Ariana Gillis, *Forget Me Not* (MapleMusic); Van Morrison, *Born To Sing: No Plan B* (Exile/Blue Note); Willie Nelson, *Heroes* (Sony Music Canada); Bonnie Raitt, *Slipstream* (Redwing Records); Trampled By Turtles, *Stars and Satellites* (Banjodad Records); Various artists, *This One's For Him: A Tribute To Guy Clark* (Icehouse Music); World Famous Headliners, *World Famous Headliners* (Big Yellow Dog Records)

**New Discoveries:** John Fullbright, Jerron Blind Boy Paxton, World Famous Headliners

**Tom Coxworth:** Producer, *Folk Routes*, CKUA Radio Network: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Canailles, *Manger Du Bois* (Select); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Independent); Simone Felice, *Simone Felice* (Dine Alone Records); John Wort Hannam, *Brambles and Thorns* (Borealis); Cathy Jordan, *All the Way Home* (Blix Street); Loreena McKennitt, *Troubadours on the Rhine* (Quinlan Road); Passenger, *All the Little Lights* (Nettwerk); The Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra, *Follow My Lead, Lead Me To Follow* (Independent); The White Buffalo, *Once Upon A Time in the West* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Cannailles, Corin Raymond, Awna Teixeira

**Ian Davies:** Artistic director, Acoustic Muse Concerts & Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club, London, ON: Bellowhead, *Broadside* (Navigator); Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (Nonesuch); The Chieftains, *Voice of Ages* (Hear Music); Comas, *Charge* (Mad River); Cathy Jordan, *All The Way Home* (Blix Street); Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass); Lyle Lovett, *Release Me* (Curb); Danny Michel & The Benque Players, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Esperanza Spalding, *Radio Music Society* (Heads Up); Bruce

Springsteen, *Wrecking Ball* (Columbia)

**New Discoveries:** The Fretless, Kruger Brothers, Sam Lee

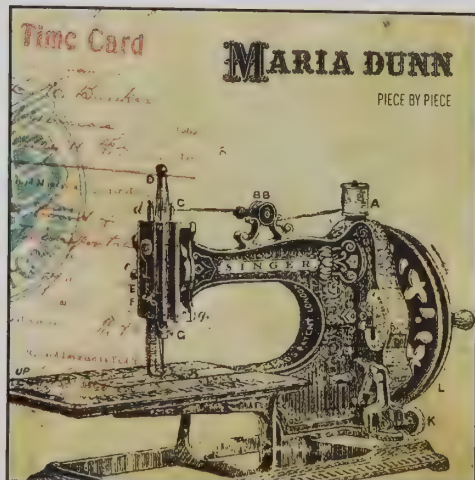
**Greg Davis:** Owner, Soundscapes, Toronto, ON: Evening Hymns, *Spectral Dusk* (Shuffling Feet); First Aid Kit, *The Lion's Roar* (Yep Roc); Damien Jurado, *Maraqopa* (Secretly Canadian); Tim Maia, *Nobody Can Live Forever: Existential Soul Of Tim Maia* (Luaka Bop); Rodriguez, *Searching For Sugarman* (Sony); Rumer, *Seasons Of My Soul* (Warner); Tallest Man On Earth, *There's No Leaving Now* (Dead Oceans); Various artists, *Behind Closed Doors: Where Country Meets Soul* (Kent); Various artists, *Country Funk* (Light In The Attic); Various artists, *Country Soul Sisters* (Soul Jazz)

**New Discoveries:** Cold Specks, comeback of Iris DeMent, Michael Kiwanuka

**Andy Donnelly:** Host, *The Celtic Show*, www.ckua.com: Breabach, *Bann* (Breabach Records); Kim Churchill, *Detail Of Distance* (Indica Records); Gerry Diver, *Speech Project* (One Fine Day Records); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Distant Whisper); Cathy Jordan, *All The Way Home* (Blix Street); Martyn Joseph, *Songs For The Coming Home* (Pipe Records); Lisa Knapp, *Hunt The Hare* (Earto); Jamie McLennan, *In Transit* (White Fall Records); Maz O'Connor, *Upon A Stranger Shore* (Demon Barber Sounds); Declan Sinnott, *I Love The Noise It Makes* (Warner Music)

**New Discoveries:** Kim Churchill, Lisa Knapp/Gerry Diver, Lori McKenna

**Steve Edge:** Artistic director, Rogue Folk Club, Vancouver, BC, (since 1987) and CTR FM 101.9 radio DJ (www.citr.ca): Eric Bibb, *Deeper In The Well* (Stony Plain); The Bills, *Yes Please* (www.thebills.ca); The Chieftains, *Voice Of Ages* (Blackrock/Hear Music); Comas, *Charge* (www.comasmusic.com); Dala, *Best Day* (Campus Music/www.dalagirls.com); The Imagined Village, *Bending The Dark* (ECC); Mark Knopfler, *Privateering* (Mercury); Old Man Luedecke, *Tender Is The Night* (True North); Mairtin O'Connor Band, *Going*





*Places* (www.mairtinocconnorband.com); Le Vent Du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis)

**New Discoveries:** Fay Hield & The Hurricane Party, Lyy, The Teetotallers

**Chris Frayer:** Artistic director, 40th Winnipeg Folk Festival: Fiona Apple, *The Idler Wheel...* (Epic); The Deep Dark Woods, *The Place I Left Behind* (WEA International); Lisa Hannigan, *Passenger* (ATO Records); Sharon Van Etten, *Tramp* (Jagjaguwar); Of Monsters and Men, *My Head Is An Animal* (Universal Republic); Punch Brothers, *Who's Feeling Young Now* (Nonesuch); The Shins, *Port Of Morrow* (Columbia); Patti Smith, *Banga* (Columbia); Patrick Watson, *Adventures In Your Own Backyard* (Secret City Records) Jack White, *Blunderbuss* (Third Man/Sony)

**New Discoveries:** Harpoonist And The Axe Murderer, Lake Street Dive, Sam Lee

**Barry Hammond:** Reviewer, *Penguin Eggs*: Amadou & Mariam, *Folila* (Because Music/Warner); Michael Jerome Browne, *The Road Is Dark* (Borealis Records); Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia Records); Mark Knopfler, *Privateering* (Mercury Records); Danny Michel & The Benque Players, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Rhett Miller, *The Dreamer* (Maximum Sunshine); Van Morrison, *Born To Sing: No Plan B* (Exile/Blue Note); Mumford & Sons, *Babel* (Glassnote Entertainment Group); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Carry Me Back* (ATO Records); Cassandra Wilson, *Another Country* (Ojah Music Group/eOne)

**New Discoveries:** Jason Collett, Lizzy Hoyt, Mumford & Sons

**Phil Harries:** *Penguin Eggs* contributor: Alabama Shakes, *Boys & Girls* (ATO); The Avett Brothers, *The Carpenter* (Universal Republic); Andrew Bird, *Break It Yourself* (Mom+Pop); The Honey Dewdrops, *Silver Lining* (CD Baby); The Lumineers, *The Lumineers* (Dualtone Music Group); Corb Lund, *Cabin Fever* (New West); Danny Michel, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Father John Misty, *Fear Fun*

(Sub Pop/Bella Union); Mumford & Sons, *Babel* (Glass Note); Passenger, *All The Lights* (Nettwerk)

**New Discoveries:** Bahamas, Lucy Kaplansky, The Wilderness of Manitoba

**Cam Hayden:** Host/producer, *Friday Night Blues Party*, CKUA Radio Network: Billy Boy Arnold, *Sings Big Bill Broonzy* (Electro-Fi); Shemekia Copeland, *33 1/3* (Telarc); Tail Dragger and Bob Corritore, *Longtime Friends in the Blues* (Delta Groove); Nathan James and the Rhythm Scratchers, *What You Make of It* (Delta Groove); Harrison Kennedy, *Shame The Devil* (Electro-Fi); Magic Slim and the Teardrops, *Bad Boy* (Blind Pig); Eddie Martin with his Big Blues Band, *Looking Forward Looking Back* (Blueblood); John Primer, *Blues On Solid Ground* (Blues House); Janiva Magness, *Stronger For It* (Alligator); Mud Morganfield, *Son of the Seventh Son* (Severn Records); Ann Rabson with Bob Margolin, *Not Alone* (Vizzitone)

**New Discoveries:** Heritage Blues Orchestra, Royal Southern Brotherhood

**Mike Hill:** Artistic director, Mariposa Folk Festival: Bahamas, *Barchords* (Independent); Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Mary Chapin Carpenter, *Ashes and Roses* (Rounder Records); Dala, *Best Day* (Campus Music/DALA); Kathleen Edwards, *Voyageur* (MapleMusic Recordings); Family of the Year, *Loma Vista* (Nettwerk); The Fretless, *Waterbound* (Independent); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Madison Violet, *The Good In Goodbye* (High Romance); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records)

**New Discoveries:** Coco Love Alcorn, Family of the Year, The Fretless

**James Keelaghan:** Artistic director, Georgian Bay Folk Society: Agnostic Phibes Rhythm and Blood Conspiracy, *Campfire Tales* (S.A.P. Recordings); Jon Brookes, *Delicate Cages* (Borealis); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Independent); Lemon Bucket Orchestra,

Lume Lume (Fedora Upside-Down); Karine Polwart, *Traces* (Hegri Music); Vishten, *Mosaik* (Independent); White Buffalo, *Once Upon A Time In The West* (Unison); LP, *Into the Wild* (Warner Bros.); Royal Wood, *We Were Born to Glory* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** The Claytones, Lake Street Dive, Lemon Bucket Orchestra

**Patrick Langston:** Freelance writer, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Penguin Eggs*, others: Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (Signature Sounds); John Carroll, *Everybody Smokes in Hell*, (Independent); Iris DeMent, *Sing the Delta* (Flariella Records); Brian Dunn, *tv's and radios* (Independent); Justin Townes Earle, *Nothing's Going To Change the Way You Feel About Me Now* (Boodshot Records); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Lucy Kaplansky, *Reunion* (Red House); Mumford and Sons, *Babel* (Universal); Rodriguez, *Searching for Sugarman* (Sony Music Canada); John K. Sampson, *Provincial* (Anti-)

**New Discoveries:** Brian Dunn, Sarah Jane Scouten, Cassie Taylor

**Roger Levesque:** Freelance music writer, *Penguin Eggs*, *Edmonton Journal*: Antibalas, *Antibalas* (Daptone); Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (Nonesuch); Fred Eaglesmith, *6 Volts* (Entertainment One); Habib Koite & Eric Bibb, *Brothers In Bamako* (Stony Plain); Fela Kuti, *Live In Detroit 1986* (Knitting Factory); Danny Michel, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Anoushka Shankar, *Traveller* (Deutsche Grammophon); Chris Smither, *Hundred Dollar Valentine* (Signature Sounds); Le Vent Du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis); Martha Wainwright, *Come Home To Mama* (MapleMusic)

**New Discoveries:** Rahim AlHaj, Calypso Rose, Minor Empire

**Scott Lingley:** Freelance music writer: Antibalas, *Antibalas* (Daptone); Andrew Bird, *Break It Yourself* (Bella Union/Mom & Pop); Caalexico, *Algiers* (Anti-); Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Sony); Dirty Projectors,





# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

*Swing Lo Magellan* (Domino); Justin Townes Earle, *Nothing's Gonna Change The Way You Feel About Me Now* (Bloodshot); Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch); Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes & Truckstops* (Last Gang); Various artists, *Next Stop ... Soweto, Vol. 3: Giants, Ministers and Makers* (Strut); The Walkmen, *Heaven* (Fat Possum)

**New Discoveries:** Bahamas, Del Barber, Lindi Ortega

**Sandy MacDonald:** Freelance music writer, Halifax: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Craig Cardiff, *Floods and Fires* (Maple Music); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music); The Deep Dark Woods, *The Place I Left Behind* (WEA International); The Fretless, *Waterbound* (Independent); Old Man Luedecke & Lake of Stew, *Sing All About It* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *Silhouette* (True North Records); The Once, *Row Upon Row Of The People They Know* (Borealis); Thom Swift & Keith Mullins, *The Wood Buffalo Youth Song Project* (Independent); Whitehorse, *Whitehorse* (Six Shooter Records)

**New Discoveries:** Ben Caplan & the Casual Smokers, Keri Latimer, Sagapool

**Jim Marino:** Host, *Freewheeling Folk Show & Smokin' Bluegrass Show*, 93.3 CFMU (cfmu.mcmaster.ca), Hamilton, ON: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Barney Bentall, *Flesh and Bone* (True North); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music); Amelia Curran, *Spectators* (Six Shooter); Ariana Gillis, *Forget Me Not* (Independent); Great Lake Swimmers, *New Wild Everywhere* (Nettwerk); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Independent); Linda McRae, *Rough Edges and Ragged Hearts* (Independent); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man); S.G. Sinnicks, *The Last Irishman in Corktown* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Dale Boyle, Mark McNeil and Kris Rochard, Jeffery Michael Straker

**Arthur McGregor:** Artistic director, The Ottawa Folklore Centre: Rik Barron, *Speechless*, (Independent); Michael Jerome Brown, *The Road Is Dark* (Borealis);

Lenord Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Columbia); James Hill, *Man with a Love Song* (Borealis); Red Horse, *Red Horse* (Rod House Records); Mary Jane Lamond and Wendy Macisaac, *Seinn* (Turtle Music); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records); Stan Rogers, *Fogarty's Cove* (Borealis); Sean Tyrrrell, *Rising Tide* (Longwalk Music); Sneezzy Waters, *Sneezzy Waters*, (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Brent Mason, Greg Kelly.

**Ian Menzies:** Music industry consultant, programmer at JazzYYC: Ry Cooder, *Election Special* (Nonsuch); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside); Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (E1); Gordon Grdina's Harem, *Her Eyes Illuminate* (Songlines); Danny Michel, *Blackbirds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Anais Mitchell, *Young Man In America* (Wilderland); Mumford & Sons, *Babel* (Glassnote); Nova Lima, *Karimba* (ESL); Ondratropica, *Ondratropica* (Soundway); Punch Brothers, *Who's Feeling Young Now* (Nonsuch)

**New Discoveries:** The Battle of Santiago, Cold Specs, The Crackling

**Julie Miller:** Concert presenter and radio host, CFLX Sherbrooke, QC: The Barra MacNeils, *The Celtic Colours Sessions* (Barra); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Danny Michel, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records); Nicolas Pellerin, *Petit Grain D'or* (Unidisc); Zachary Richard, *Le fou* (DEP); Oliver Schroer and Nuala Kennedy, *Enthralled* (Borealis); Le Vent du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis); Vishten, *Mosaik* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Matt Andersen, Matthew McCully; Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra

**Monica Miller:** Host/producer, *How I Hear It*, CKUA Radio Network: Ba Cissoko, *Nimassa* (Cristal); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside); Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Independent); Kathleen Edwards, *Voyageur* (Maple Music); Chilly Gonzales, *Solo Piano II* (Arts

& Crafts); Danny Michel, *Black Birds Are Dancing Over Me* (Six Shooter); A.C. Newman, *Shut Down The Streets* (Last Gang); Whitehorse, *The Fate Of The World Depends On This Kiss* (Six Shooter); Bobby Womack, *The Bravest Man In The Universe* (XL)

**New Discoveries:** Jennah Barry, Declan O'Donovan, Of Monsters And Men

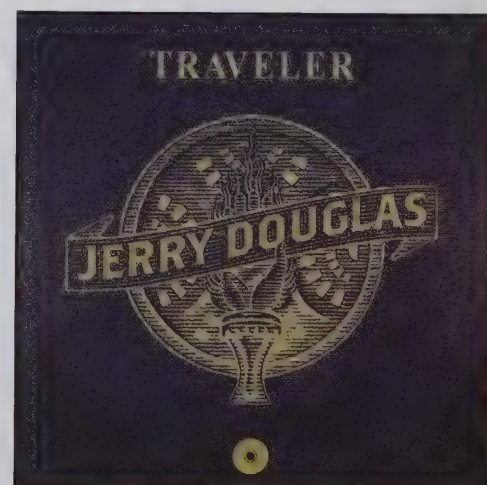
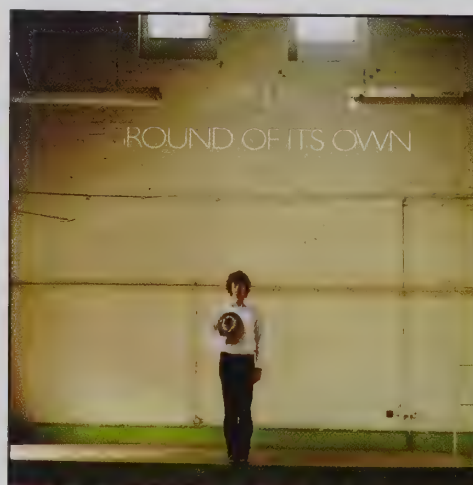
**Tony Montague:** Music journalist, *Georgia Strait, fRoots, Penguin Eggs*: Caalexico, *Algiers* (Anti-); Canailles, *Manger Du Bois* (Grosse Boîte/Sélect); Kevin Crawford, *Carrying The Tune* (BailyO Records); Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia); Pokey Lafarge, *Middle of Everywhere* (Free Dirt Records); Lo Jo, *Cinéma El Mundo* (World Village); Nicolas Pellerin et les Grands Hurleurs, *Petit Grain D'Or* (Unidisc); Staff Benda Bilili, *Bouger Le Monde* (Crammed); Van Django, *Waltz In The Shape of a Tree* (Independent); Le Vent Du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis)

**New Discoveries:** Canailles, Alexandra Robles, The Teetotalers

**Tom Murray:** Music writer, *Edmonton Journal*: Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, *Mature Themes* (4AD); Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (Nonesuch); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made a Spark* (Outside) Iris DeMent, *Sing the Delta* (Flariella); Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia); First Aid Kit, *The Lion's Roar* (Red Eye); Mount Eerie, *Clear Moon* (P.W. Elverum & Sun); Mountain Goats, *Transcendental Youth* (Merge); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Carry Me Back* (ATO Records); Old Man Luedecke, *Tender is the Night* (True North Records)

**New Discoveries:** Jom Comyn, Jessica Jalbert, Rodriguez

**David Newland:** Editor-in-Chief, *Roots Music Canada*: The Bills, *Yes Please* (Independent); Rodney Brown with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, *Songs of Fort William* (Starsilk Records); Christa Couture, *The Living Record* (Independent); Nancy Dutra, *Time Will Tell* (Independent); Evening Hymns, *Spectral Dusk*





(Shuffling Feet Records); JP Hoe, *Mannequin* (Independent); Graydon James & the Young Novelists, *In The Year You Were Born* (Independent); Linda McRae, *Rough Edges & Ragged Hearts* (42 RPM); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Independent); Oliver Swain, *In A Big Machine* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Jean-Paul De Roover, Lindsay Ferguson, Oliver Swain

**Rob Oakie:** Executive director, Music PEI: Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, *Kings and Queens* (True North); Sam Carter, *The No Testament* (Captain); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music); Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (Entertainment One); Dennis Ellsworth, *Dusk Dreams* (Busted Flat); Gypsophilia, *Constellation* (Forward Music); Old Man Luedecke, *Tender Is The Night* (True North); Tim O'Brien, *O'Brien Party of 7*, *Reincarnation* (Howdie Skies Records); Iarla O'Lionaird, *Foxlight* (Real World); Punch Brothers, *Ahoy* (Nonesuch); Dan Walsh, *Same But Different* (Rooksmere Records)

**New Discoveries:** Sam Carter, John Smith, Dan Walsh

**Sue Panning:** Artistic director, Canmore Folk Music Festival, Heritage Day long weekend: Avett Brothers, *The Carpenter* (Republic); Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Bahamas, *Barchords* (Universal Republic); Brandi Carlile, *Bear Creek* (Columbia); Kim Churchill, *Detail of Distance* (Indica); Dala, *Best Day* (Compass Records/Maple Music); David Myles, *Into the Sun* (Little Tiny Records); Old Man Luedecke, *Tender Is The Night* (True North); Rosie Burgess Trio, *Before I Set Sail* (Payne Street Records); Whitehorse, *The Fate of the World Depends on This Kiss* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** Carrie Elkin, Mike Farris, Langhorne Slim

**Tom Power:** Musician, broadcaster, host of *Deep Roots*, cbc.ca: Duane Andrews and Dwayne Cote, *The Empress* (Independent); The Avett Brothers, *The Carpenter* (Independent); Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Kathleen Edwards, *Voyageur* (MapleMusic);

Old Man Luedecke, *Tender is the Night* (True North); Punch Brothers, *Who's Feeling Young Now?* (Warner); Father John Misty, *Fear Fun* (Sub Pop); John K. Samson, *Provincial* (Anti-); Sheesham and Lotus, *More Hokum with Sheesham and Lotus and Son* (Independent); Sara Watkins, *Sun Midnight Sun* (Nonesuch)

**New Discoveries:** Father John Misty, Gabrielle Papillion, The Staves

**Steve Pritchard:** Roots radio programmer, CIUT Radio, Toronto, www.ciut.fm: Andrew Collins, *Cats and Dogs* (Independent); Cris Cuddy, *Diamond Shine* (Independent); Hard Ryde, *Composed* (Independent); Old Man Luedecke, *Tender Is The Night* (True North); Annie Lou, *Grandma's Rules For Drinking* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *Silhouette* (True North); The Once, *Row Upon Row of the People They Know* (Borealis); Corin Raymond, *There Will Always Be A Small Time* (Independent); The Slocan Ramblers, *Shaking The Acorns Down* (Independent); The Spinney Brothers, *Memories* (Mountain Fever Records)

**New Discoveries:** Annie Lou, Ric Barron, The Dardenelles

**Tim Readman:** Musician, songwriter and *Penguin Eggs* contributor: Altan, *Gleann Nimhe – The Poison Glen* (Compass Records); Joy Dunlop and Twelfth Day, *Fiere* (Orange Feather Records); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Independent); Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass Records); Tom Lewis, *Poles Apart* (Self-Propelled Music); Annbjørg Lien, *Khom Loy* (Compass Records); Rachel Newton, *The Shadow Side* (Shee Records); The Outside Track, *Flash Company* (Lorimer Records); Solas, *Reunion – A Decade of Solas* (Re-issue) (Compass Records); Sprag Session, *Sprag Session* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** BettySoo, Renato Borghetti, Los Pinguos

**Mike Regenstreif:** Music journalist (*Sing Out!* Magazine, *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin*, frfb.blogspot.com, *The Forward*) and broadcaster: Eric Bibb, *Deeper in the*

*Well* (Stony Plain); Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Columbia); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Distant Whisper); Bob Dylan, *Tempest* (Columbia); Woody Guthrie, *Woody at 100* (Smithsonian Folkways); Kim & Reggie Harris, *Resurrection Day* (Appleseed); Anne Hills, *The Things I Notice Now* (Appleseed); Lucy Kaplansky, *Reunion* (Red House); Kathy Mattea, *Calling Me Home* (Sugar Hill); Stan Rogers, *Between the Breaks Live!* (Turnaround (Borealis))

**New Discoveries:** Kat Goldman, Cahalen Morrison & Eli West, *Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra*

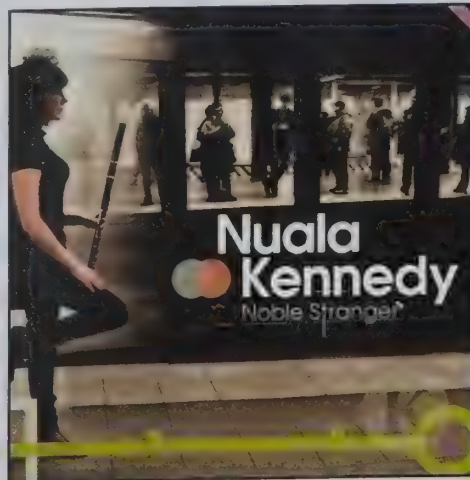
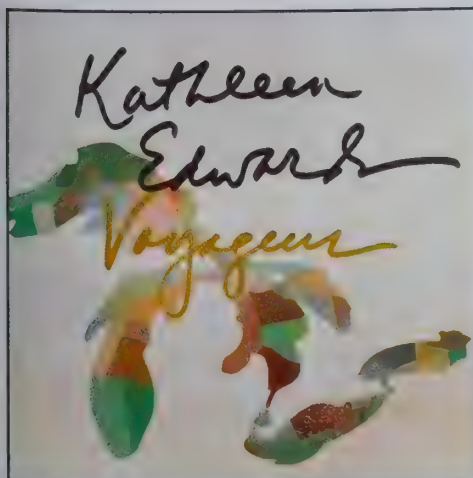
**Jeff Robson:** Host, *Tell the Band To Go Home*, www.tellthebandtogohome.com, and *Steel Belted Radio*, CJUM 101.5 UMFM, Winnipeg: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Andrew Combs, *Worried Man* (Coin Records); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside); JP Hoe, *Mannequin* (Independent); Keri Latimer, *Crowsfeet and Greyskull* (CD Baby); Shannon Lyon, *Broken Things* (Busted Flat); Christina Martin, *Sleeping With a Stranger* (Come Undone); Dale Murray, *Dream Mountain Dream* (Come Undone); Matthew Ryan, *In the Dusk of Everything* (Independent); Leeroy Stagger, *Radiant Land* (Gold Lake)

**New Discoveries:** Andrew Combs, Drew Nelson, Melissa Payne

**Mike Sadava:** Edmonton-based freelance journalist and musician: Basco, *Big Basco* (Independent); Rodney Crowell and Mary Karr, *KIN* (Vanguard); Sarah Jarosz, *Follow Me Down* (Sugar Hill); John and Roy, *Let It Go* (Warner); Linda McRae, *Rough Edges and Ragged Hearts* (42 RPM); New Country Rehab, *NCR* (Independent); Darrell Scott, *Long Ride Home* (Full Light); J.R. Shore, *State Theatre* (Independent); Andy Statman, *Old Brooklyn* (Shefa Records); Suzie Vinnick, *Me 'n' Mabel* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Jackstraw, July Talk, Terry McLeish

**Jason Schneider:** Roots editor, Exclaim!; co-author of *Have Not Been the Same: the CanRock Renaissance*

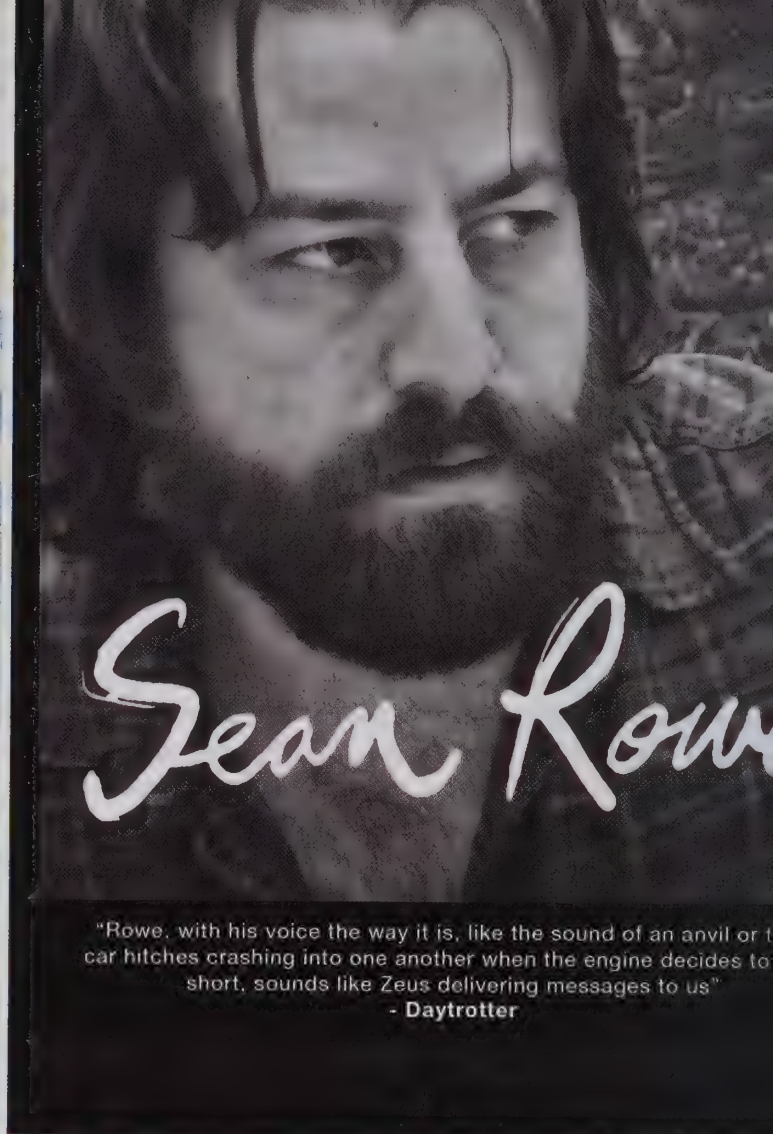






garing Season

Beth Orton



Sean Rowe

"Rowe, with his voice the way it is, like the sound of an anvil or a car hitches crashing into one another when the engine decides to short, sounds like Zeus delivering messages to us"

- Daytrotter

## THE MILK CARTON KIDS



"The Milk Carton Kids transport with heartbreaking understatement. Extraordinary musical facility, both vocal and on vintage guitar, meets humor, smarts and style on an otherwise ordinary stage."

- Huffington Post



1985-95 (ECW Press); Alabama Shakes, *Boys & Girls* (ATO); Caexico, *Algiers* (Anti-); Gary Clark Jr., *Blak And Blu* (Warner); Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch); Bill Fay, *Life Is People* (Dead Oceans); Lee Fields & The Expressions, *Faithful Man* (Truth & Soul); Lambchop, *Mr. M* (Merge); Mark Lanegan, *Blues Funeral* (4AD); Corb Lund, *Cabin Fever* (New West); Jack White, *Blunderbuss* (Third Man/Sony)

**New Discoveries:** Jerry Leger & The Situation, Eamonn McGrath, Tarantuela

**Iles siemieniuk:** General manager, Calgary Folk Music Festival: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Bill Bourne, *Song from a Gypsy Caravan* (True North); Coal Creek Boys, *Hard At It In Old Town* (Independent); Cold Specks, *I Predict A Graceful Expulsion* (Arts & Crafts); Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Columbia); John Wort Hannam, *Brambles and Thorns* (Borealis); Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes & Truckstops* (Last Gang); John K Sampson, *Provincial* (Independent); Bruce Springsteen, *Wrecking Ball* (Columbia); Frank Turner, *Last Minutes Lost Evenings* (Epitaph)

**New Discoveries:** Coal Creek Boys, Cold Specks, Lindi Ortega

**Lyle Skinner:** Host/producer, *Prairie Ceilidh*, CKJS Radio 810, Winnipeg, MN: Altan, *Gleann Nimhe* (Compass); The Barra MacNeils, *The Celtic Colours Sessions* (Barra); Breabach, *Bann* (Independent); The Chieftains, *Voice Of Ages* (Concord / Hear); Ennis, *The Fortunate Ones* (Independent); Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass); Mary Jane Lamond & Wendy MacIsaac, *Seinn* (Turtlemusik); Cara Luft, *Darlingford* (Blue Case Tunes); Le Vent Du Nord, *Tromper Le Temps* (Borealis); West Of Eden, *Safe Crossing* (West Of Music)

**New Discoveries:** Saor Patrol, Sketch, The Young'Uns

**Carolyn Sutherland:** Artistic director, Shelter Valley Folk Festival, Grafton, ON, [www.sheltervalley.com](http://www.sheltervalley.com); artistic director, YogaSong: Bahamas, *Whole Wide World* (Nevado Records); Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Justin Townes Earl, *Nothing's Gonna Change The Way You Feel About Me Now* (Bloodshot); *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Nuala Kennedy, *Noble Stranger* (Compass); Catherine MacLellan, *Silhouette* (True North); Dan Mangan, *Oh Fortune* (Arts and Crafts); James Vincent McMorrow, *Early in the Morning* (Vagrant Records); The Once, *Row Upon Row of the People They Know* (Borealis); Whitehorse, *The Fate of the World Depends On This Kiss* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** Amanda Bon

**Doug Swanson:** Copy editor/writer, *Penguin Eggs*: Annie Lou, *Grandma's Rules For Drinking* (Independent); Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden*

(Nonesuch); Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (eOne); John Wort Hannam, *Brambles and Thorns* (Borealis); The Honey Dewdrops, *Silver Lining* (CD Baby); Lucy Kaplansky, *Reunion* (Red House); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Carry Me Back* (ATO Records); Owls By Nature, *Everything Is Hunted* (Independent); The Trishas, *High, Wide & Handsome* (Independent); Whitehorse, *The Fate Of The World Depends On This Kiss* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** The Blue Warblers, Owls By Nature, The Trishas

**Eric Thom:** Music writer: The Do Good Assassins, *ROME* (Independent); Rayna Gellert, *Old Light: Songs From My Childhood & Other Gone Worlds* (StorySound Records); Susan Greenbaum, *This Life* (Greentree/Compass Records); Jim Henman, *Same Old Feeling* (Independent); Rick Holmstrom, *Cruel Sunrise* (M.C. Records); Lucy Kaplansky, *Reunion* (Red House); Paul Thorn, *What The Hell Is Going On?* (Perpetual Obscurity Records); Roy Trevino, *Roy Trevino* (Troubadour Records); 24 Pesos, *When the Ship Goes Down* (Ourgate Records); Loudon Wainwright III, *Older Than My Old Man Now* (Story Sound Records)

**New Discoveries:** Josienne Clarke & Ben Walker, Robyn Dell'Unto, Trent Severn

**Richard Thornley:** Reviewer, *Penguin Eggs*: Antibalas, *Antibalas* (Daptone); Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (Warner); Annabelle Chvostek, *Rise* (Borealis); The DBs, *Falling Off the Sky* (Bar/None); Kathleen Edwards, *Voyageur* (Universal); Heritage Blues Orchestra, *and still I rise* (Sony); Jagwa Music, *Bongo Hotheads* (Crammed); The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, *Meat and Bone* (Sony); Mary Jane Lammond & Wendy MacIsaac, *Seinn* (Turtlemusik); Lau, *Race the Loser* (Reveal)

**New Discoveries:** Dustin Bentall and the Smokes, JD McPherson, Shovels & Rope

**Jan Vanderhorst:** Host, *Just Us Folk*, Country 1380, Brantford, ON / 100.7 The Breeze, Winnipeg, MN: Matt Andersen, *Coal Mining Blues* (Busted Flat Records);



J.P. Cormier, *Somewhere In The Back Of My Heart* (Flash Publishing); Ennis, *The Fortunate Ones* (Independent); David Essig, *Rolling Fork To Gallows Point* (Watershed Records); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Cara Luft, *Darlingford* (Blue Case Tunes); John McEuen, *McEuen Sessions* (Blue Moon Recordings); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records); Steep Canyon Rangers, *Nobody Knows You* (Rounder Records); Suzie Vinnick, *Live At Bluesville* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** The Claytones, Joe Crookston, Dry Bones

**Eric Volmers:** Entertainment writer, *Calgary Herald*; freelancer, *Penguin Eggs*: Leonard Cohen, *Old Ideas* (Columbia); Cold Specks, *I Predict a Graceful Expulsion* (Mute/EMI); Cowboy Junkies, *The Wilderness* (Latent); Kathleen Edwards, *The Voyageur* (MapleMusic Recordings); Nora Jones, *... Little Broken Hearts* (Blue Note, EMI); Corb Lund and the Hurtin' Albertans, *Cabin Fever* (New West); Sinead O'Connor, *How About I Be Me (And You be You)?* (One Little Indian); Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes & Truckstops* (Last Gang Records); Rae Spoon, *I Can't Keep All of Our Secrets* (Saved By Radio); Bruce Springsteen, *Wrecking Ball* (Columbia)

**New Discoveries:** Cold Specks, Dennis Ellsworth, Ralph Boyd Johnson

**Terry Wickham:** Producer, Edmonton Folk Music Festival: Amadou and Mariam, *Folila* (Because/None-such); Cold Specks, *I Predict A Graceful Expulsion* (Arts and Crafts); Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music); Jerry Douglas, *Traveler* (Entertainment One); Dr. John, *Locked Down* (Nonesuch); First Aid Kit, *The Lion's Roar* (Wichita Recordings); Lindi Ortega, *Cigarettes and Truckstops* (Last Gang); Mighty Popo, *Gakondo* (Borealis); Bonnie Raitt, *Slipstream* (Redwing); Trampled By Turtles, *Stars and Satellites* (Six Shooter Records)

**New Discoveries:** Cold Specs, Kate Miller-Heidke, James Vincent Morrow

**Michael (A Man Called) Wrycraft:** Album designer, festival emcee, concert curator: Del Barber, *Headwaters* (Six Shooter); Annabelle Chvostek, *Rise* (Borealis); Maria Dunn, *Piece By Piece* (Outside Music); Dave Gunning, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music); Bruce Guthro, *Celtic Crossing* (Ridge); Keri Latimer, *Crowsfeet and Greyskull* (CD Baby); Ivy Mairi, *No Talker* (Latent Recordings); Scott McCord, *Scott McCord & The Bonafide Truth* (Bonafide Tunes); Jory Nash, *Little Pilgrim* (Thin Man Records); Scarlett Jane, *Stranger* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** QuiQue Escamilla, The Pep Tides, Stray Birds.





## Cuba Libre

**Grammy Award-winning world music wunderkind Alex Cuba lives in a small town in rural British Columbia. While he includes Ron Sexsmith and Nellie Furtado as past collaborators, his wonderful new solo album leaves our Lark Clark smitten.**

Alex Cuba is one savvy dude. His steady rise to popular acclaim has been staked out on his own terms, a rare achievement in the music business, yet with each recording he has claimed new territory, both stylistically and emotionally.

Alex: sings in Spanish; writes like a folk-singer but sings like a rocker; plays lead guitar with a bass player's technique; writes sweet, even happy, lyrics.

Alex doesn't: live in Toronto; live in America; run in "world music" circles; sing much English.

"It's been hard to convince the music industry in Canada," says Alex. "I'm not a museum piece. There are people who say, because of your background, you should do a certain thing. It keeps you exotic."

And that's not what Alex wants to be. His musical journey has been an effort to be recognizable but not typical. Cuban—but definitely not exotic.

Alex began performing as a child with a family band organized by his father. He was assigned to the bass, while brother Adonis was given the role of lead singer. Following their move to British Columbia in 1999, the Puentes Brothers released their first Canadian album, *Morumba Cubana*. The Brothers' straightforward approach to Cuban music attracted a Juno nomination and the stirrings of a following. In the wake of *Buena Vista Social Club*'s popularity and Canadians' mild vengeance of being able to travel where Americans are forbidden, northerners were eager to have Cubans of their own.

"I like Canada," Alex declares unabashedly and frequently. "This is a place that's wide open and you can find something new. I'm a creator. Nobody sounds like me."

Why would Alex leave Cuba, a place where national identity is synonymous with music? Alex replies, "I knew I had a universal soul. Without fame the Cuban people wouldn't understand what I'm doing. But now that I've got fame, they say, 'Oh yeah'."

After the first album, the brothers parted musical company, with Adonis heading down to L.A. seeking more Latin pastures and Alex embracing a determinedly Canadian trek. *Humo de Tabaco*, Alex's first solo album, resonated with songwriting that sounded Cuban but somehow had a Canadian sensibility. It also had Ron Sexsmith on it, the two singers bringing out each other's

romantic qualities. *Buena Vista Social Club* was nowhere to be heard.

Thinking back to that album, Alex says, "When I told my father I was going to be singing on the album, he told me to leave the singing to my brother." But Alex was writing a profusion of songs, all designed for himself, not the Brothers. Around this time he also switched from bass to lead guitar, and within a short time he was charging into high gear on his Gibson ES355. Alex was becoming a rock star.

If you understand a bit of Spanish, you can imagine being loved by Alex Cuba. Perennially embracing the bursting energy of new love, his lyrics flow with delightful poetry. Here's a sample from *Suspiro En Falso*, a song on the latest album: "The sounds of your mouth go from the sky to the sea, rest on corals to give me a sign, returning to the sky like a rocket in a lunar eclipse. I sigh in falsetto."

Gulp!

Where does this intensity come from? "I started from a place of powerful love and it has become the most unbelievable thing. My woman believes in me 3,000 per cent. I feel the same thing today that I felt when I met her."

That woman is Alex's wife with whom he has three children. They live in Smithers, BC, a small mountain town with two great bakeries, a used book store with coffee and homemade soup, a string of mountain-wear clothing stores, perched in a fantastically beautiful setting, a mini-Banff without crowds.

"The best decision I made when I came to Canada was to move to Smithers. My wife's family is there. My children live in a community, their school is great."

Alex's community involvement hit a new high when the local art teacher had the kids create effects on a photo of Alex's nimbus-like Afro in silhouette. Versions of Alex with plaid hair or radiating vortices showed up on store windows all over downtown Smithers and on Facebook. The melee upside Alex's head generated more than 90 images, which Alex decided to use as the cover of the new album, *Ruido en el Sistema* (*Static in the System*).

Co-writing and recording with Nellie Furtado in 2009 had brought high-profile success for Alex. His duet with her, *Mi Plan*, became the title track of her album, hitting No. 1 on the Latin *Billboard* chart



**“Creativity comes from a divine place of openness.”** – Alex Cuba

and scoring a Latin Grammy. World-wide release on the Universal label garnered enthusiastic fans throughout Europe and in Japan for Alex, followed by a Latin Grammy for Best New Artist. During the same period, his own self-titled CD was nominated for a Grammy in the Latin Pop category.

“This time I knew I had to come up with something even better. What I want to do is make music that has substance, so that years from now you can still listen to my songs. I’m accessible but I’m doing my own thing.”

Alex chose to work again with Joby Baker (The Bills; Marc Atkinson Trio; Rachelle Van Zanten) from Victoria, who had produced and played on his previous album, *Agua del Pozo*. “Joby is so good in the studio. My music speaks to him. He shows different possibilities to me. I say, ‘Yeah, I like this, I don’t like that one’. He can create so many different sounds.”

*Ruido En El Sistema* starts gently, with a new sound we haven’t heard from Alex before. Whispering vocals swing with ease punctuated by acoustic guitar. *Sin Un Porque* brings in a horn section recorded separately at Egrem Studios in Havana, with jazz harmonies spreading like melting butter. *Por Donde Vas* sounds like a Beatles melody with psychedelically optimistic lyrics (“...Launch your own arrow, the universe is as big as your faith. If you don’t see it, Sing with me, and I will give you the dream.”).

“Every song comes to me as a message. I’m a sponge to the universe. Creativity comes from a divine place of openness.

“When I’m sad or upset I’m like every human being, I have these things, too. At that time, I hate the guitar. Then I don’t write music. When I feel positive, I love pencils.

“My songs go beyond language. I don’t stay with a niche. Beautiful songs speak to the whole world.”

Maybe you like a little more angst in your music. Or maybe you think people from Cuba should stick to salsa. But Alex Cuba doesn’t care about that. “I play any kind of music. You should only make music your heart is telling you to.”

## Double Trouble

**A blues duo called The Harpoonist And The Axe Murderer obviously have a tale or two to tell. Our Jason Schneider starts with their magnificently raw approach to their latest release, *Checkered Past*.**

With duos currently dominating nearly every genre, asking how they met each other almost feels like cocktail party chatter. As with real marriages, the most interesting stories behind musical marriages are often indicative of strength and longevity. Shawn Hall and Matthew Rogers, known professionally as The Harpoonist & The Axe Murderer, have been together for more than a decade but it’s only been since they left tongues wagging at the Western Canadian Music Awards earlier this year that any real attention has been paid to their raw take on the blues, captured magnificently on their latest album, *Checkered Past*.

It’s a gritty mix of chestnuts such as *You Can’t Judge A Book By Its Cover* and *Mellow Down Easy* with equally rump-shaking originals, the result of the pair’s unusual sound—perhaps best described as a two-man one-man band. Their story becomes

even more intriguing when Hall reveals that they wouldn’t have started playing together at all if it hadn’t been for—of all things—a Jamaican pizza parlour in Vancouver. “I was fresh out of recording engineering school in 2001 and I offered to make a radio jingle for this place,” Hall explains. “We needed a guitarist and I happened to find Matt, who put his part down over the Internet. I actually didn’t meet him until a few months later. I’m amazed that the ad made it on the air, although I never got the free pizza I was hoping for.”

From there, Hall and Rogers struck up a long-distance relationship grounded in a love of the blues, even though it was largely unexplored territory for each of them. “I played blues harmonica in my high school band, but I kind of avoided it during my twenties, for good reason,” Hall says. “It’s deep, deep shit for white Canadian kids to get into. Blues is a part of almost everything in today’s music, and when two guys decide to play it stripped down, there’s no smoke and mirrors. We found that we really had to work hard, and it took a long time for us to feel comfortable and feel that we belong in that genre.”

Under the guise of the Harpoonist (borrowed from the famous line in Kris Kristofferson’s *Me & Bobby McGee*) and the Axe Murderer (for Rogers’s feral treat-



The Harpoonist & The Axe Murderer



# Tubthumping

ment of his instrument), the pair's sound puts the emphasis squarely on the songs rather than any instrumental gimmickry, although Rogers does show off remarkable dexterity by playing a makeshift drum kit with his feet. It's led to HAM often being lazily compared to the most prominent blues-based duos in recent years, the White Stripes and the Black Keys, even though they are traditionalists at heart. However, that doesn't mean they have ever taken an academic approach to blues. "The biggest challenge for us is always the amount of energy we have to exert during our live shows," Rogers says.

"We're not the type of band that can do anything half-assed and have it come off well. It sounds horrible if we don't give it our all. People might not think that because we're sitting down onstage, but playing guitar and playing drums with my feet, sometimes at the end of a show I'm totally winded. Shawn has to deal with the same thing with the breath control he needs singing and playing harmonica. Most of the

time we're sweating by the second song."

Rogers admits that the band did start out with a more acoustic sound and that the evolution to what they captured on *Checkered Past* took years. He took it upon himself to catch up to Hall's knowledge of blues from the 1920s and '30s, a period he says that a lot of aspiring blues musicians tend to steer away from. "We chose to use that as a starting point for our sound and kind of let it grow from there," Rogers says. "The biggest discovery for me was probably Mississippi John Hurt. He was phenomenal. There was also Big Bill Broonzy and Charley Patton. Getting into Son House really upped our energy level quite a bit as well."

The focus on groove is evident throughout *Checkered Past*, their third self-produced album, in particular on the original material. Hall explains that trial and error with their recording process is what eventually brought them to this point, where building the songs up from a solid rhythmic foundation has become more important

than simply capturing a lively performance.

"Our second record was recorded in three days, basically live off the floor, but those songs never really worked when we played them after that, for whatever reason," Hall says. "This one took a year. We wanted a really clever record that worked on a lot of levels. We wanted it to be a great headphone record, and at the same time a great record to drive to. What really happened was that we became kind of a party band without ever really intending to, so we wanted to make a record that tipped our hats to the fans who pushed us in that direction."

Although the Vancouver area has always boasted its share of great blues artists, from Long John Baldry and the Powder Blues Band to Jim Byrnes and David Gogo, HAM is clearly bringing something new to a scene that Hall describes magnanimously as fragmented. With their WCMA triumph now in their back pocket, the pair has signed up with Paquin Entertainment as their booking agency and is eagerly antici-

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pating touring the country on a regular basis. “We’ve been supporting cats who have been supporting us for the past two years or so, Steve Kozak and Harpdog Brown, and they’ve become almost like older brothers for us,” Hall says.

“I guess what we’ve learned is that there’s almost this code of ethics to being a blues musician. On one hand, that’s an amazing thing, but it also tends to keep it stuck from time to time. What I’ve noticed in the past eight months is so many new duos, boyfriend and girlfriend or whatever, playing music totally stripped down to the bone, and that’s really encouraging and refreshing to me. It’s a rebellion against the entire Auto-Tune generation.”

## Radio Roots

**CKUA Radio ranks as the pre-eminent roots radio station in the country. And this hugely vital community-supported station has just moved into a new, state-of-the-art, \$17-million building in Edmonton. Alan Kellogg provides the spectacular details.**

Over its remarkable 85-year run, Alberta public broadcaster CKUA has traversed more hills and valleys than a Tour de France team—and without those performance-enhancing drugs.

For decades a provincial government charge buffeted by changing political masters, the historic radio network finally bottomed out in 1997, literally going off the air for a short period. Set adrift by the hard right Alberta government of Ralph Klein and handed over for transition to a hapless political crony, the acknowledged national treasure with its world-class library and unique programming danced with privatization and chaos until disaster morphed into common sense.

Not without considerable individual sacrifice, sweat equity, imagination, dogged determination and broad grassroots support, the station has not only bounced back but has just moved into arguably the most impressive—certainly the hippest—radio facility in western Canada, if not the nation. This unlikely redemptive tale is surely among the sunniest in the challenging (!)



L to R: CKUA's Andy Donnelly, host of The Celtic Show, and Tom Coxworth, host of Folk Routes

file of North American listener-supported public broadcasting of late.

As CKUA's call letters suggest, the station began in 1927 on Edmonton's University of Alberta campus, one of the country's earliest wireless outlets and Canada's first public broadcaster. Its pioneering ways included the True North's first programming in realms such as poetry, university lectures and concert presentations.

In the years since, through master and mandate transformations, cutbacks, periods of relatively stable funding, internal and external political *sturm und drang* and the odd tectonic shift, the place has somehow managed to innovate, rise above, remain contemporary without selling its soul. The province's first FM signal originated here, and it was the first to live-stream online.

CKUA's fare is all-but-unique in the nation, and as many *Penguin Eggs* readers know by daily routine, you won't find a better roots music station in the nation.

The new digs—the reconstructed Alberta Hotel on Edmonton's downtown Jasper Avenue—has been a long time coming, and its story is no less dramatic and phoenix-like than the station's. And, as it turns out, sports its own roster of firsts as well.

At its construction in 1903, the Alberta was Edmonton's Victorian jewel and most

sumptuous lodgings, built a year before the town incorporated and two before Alberta became a province. The first four-storey building in the rough-hewn prairie town, which didn't begin to boom until a decade later, it also housed its first elevator. By the time it was moved in the 1980s to accommodate the federal government's Canada Place, the Alberta Hotel's glory years and storied guest list were long, long gone.

Nonetheless, Edmonton city council wisely took apart the faded Romanesque beauty with its trademark turret and cupola and placed it in storage.

Enter stage left former city councillor, architect and developer Gene Dub, who put the shell back together again along with contemporary additions, hoping to transform the place into a boutique hotel—or, for a fleeting moment,—home to Canada's National Portrait Gallery. Not to be.

On a sunny October morn, CKUA CEO Ken Regan offers a tour of the work in progress a few days before official move-in, picking up the story.

That there was a pressing need for a new home was not in question. As one who worked as an announcer-producer for a few years in the '80s, I can report the old CKUA building was an (mostly) agreeable dump a quarter-century ago. It didn't get



it's about the music.



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## Monkey Business

**Nurtured by a flourishing Ottawa blues scene, the award-winning MonkeyJunk now rank as one of the top blues bands in North America. Roger Levesque has a chat.**

The blues always finds a foothold with each new generation. Ottawa's MonkeyJunk trio brings musical friends from a wider spread of ages and experience than usual, which may explain how they've come so far so quickly.

Get together with the three of them and you'll find that their easy banter, mutual respect and love of the music transcends age differences in a way you might expect from any group of guys who have already spent four eventful years with one another.

It was the youngest member, lead singer, harmonica man, guitarist and keyboard player Steve Marriner (now 27), and the oldest, lead guitarist Tony D. (50) who came up with the notion to form a two-guitars-no-bass combo after the examples of Hound Dog Taylor, Little Walter and others.

Drummer Matt Sobb (39) had worked with both before so it wasn't too much of a stretch when he was drafted to complete the trio, with only a phone message to inform him he

more agreeable over the years.

Stepping under the gloriously renewed trademark cupola hours before the move, a weary but pumped Regan offers cheerfully that the new world headquarters "basically fell into our lap. It was the spring of 2010 and Gene phoned to sort of show us around. It was exciting from the beginning. Here would be this historic and yet completely state-of-the-art landmark with an open feel, rich in natural light, bountiful space. It just had the right mix of respect for history to be our place, to tell our stories. It felt right."

Right, then. The vibe and the promise—not to mention the gorgeous vistas on Edmonton's fabled river valley and its urban cityscape—was perfect. All that remained was finding the money, convincing boards, pitching funders, waiting out the wait.

Piece of cake. Not.

Somehow, the will was there, the fates intervened and the hard work paid literal dividends. CKUA bought the building from Dub for \$12.5 million. The architect bought the station's old building. Meanwhile, the City of Edmonton and province of Alberta ponyed up \$5 million each. Provincial bankers ATB arranged for a mortgage under a new initiative for not-for-profits. Final building costs are expected to top \$17 million. Needless to say, a far-reaching capital campaign is underway. Space will be leased to compatible tenants.

"They all saw this project as a great fit for us becoming the gateway to the city's downtown arts district, as a source of pride."

Regan is a native of Sudbury, ON, with a long resume in broadcasting, including various stints at CBC locations. This is his second inning at CKUA, returning from a west coast job with the U.S. Discovery Channel to help pick up the pieces at CKUA following meltdown.

"It was irresistible. It's more a vocation here than a job for many of us. You have a real sense of obligation and responsibility. About the only thing I miss is the mountains."

Walking past workers through the sunlit floors, some rooms and studios almost finished, others a jumble, Regan underlines myriad opportunities for public interaction, including concert spaces, a leased street-level bar and restaurant, meeting rooms, the lot. The station's famous massive library and archives will finally have a

deserving, safe home while broadcast and recording rooms are first class.

Impressive—even incredible to some of us—as the built environment is, Regan reminds that all of it is in aid of, well ... art.

"It's about the programming and the people who make and support it. People that listen to us love music, in particular roots music. We present a broad spectrum—blues, folk, rock, R&B, traditional country and beyond. It's the foundational elements found in many kinds of music that give us the flexibility. Listen for a bit and you'll find something you really like. You'll find the links to other music.

"Our on-air people have virtually total artistic freedom. The only thing we ask is for them to avoid the gratuitous, the misogynist. To exercise respect and common sense."

Of course, the latest entry in the CKUA logbook is anything but a cinch. Assuming debt and maintaining robust staff levels carry a serious cost. That said, to its many listeners across Alberta and around the world, it's a gamble worth taking for a trusted musical compadre.

Regan: "Things will sound better but the programming won't change. We have a passion for music shared by our audience, and we are bound and connected. This is a place that refused to die and agreed to take risks, very much in the Alberta DNA.



MonkeyJunk



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## Tubthumping

would be expected at their initial Sunday night jam session back in early 2008.

"Some people who knew all of us probably thought this would never work," Matt offers, "but there's a very unique dynamic because we come from three different decades, because we bring different perspectives and different strengths to the band."

Steve recalls sensing that they had something special from the start.

"We knew after that first gig at Irene's that something cool was happening. Within a month the bar was packed and people kept coming back to see us every week."

Given those casual beginnings no one could have guessed that MonkeyJunk would be nominated as Maple Blues Award Best New Artists the following fall, before they had even had a chance to release a record. Or that a visit to the International Blues Challenge in Memphis in February 2009 would see the band come in third out of about a hundred entrants. Not a bad start. Then things "kind of blew wide open" as Steve puts it.

They managed to put out their debut disc *Tiger In Your Tank* that spring and spent the rest of the year in a round of non-stop touring before picking up five awards from six nominations in the 2010 Maple Blues giveaway including the Entertainer of the Year trophy. Then back in Memphis, the album got them the Best New Artist Award in the 2010 Blues Music Awards, only the second time (after Jeff Healey) that a Canadian act had won anything there.

The three musicians are happy to credit the support of Ottawa's blues scene—which has also nurtured names like Sue Foley and J.W.Jones—but chemistry also has something to do with their success.

"We kind of felt like we had a horseshoe shoved up the band's butt," Matt jokes. "But we're already individually well-seasoned musicians so that collective experience helped propel us, and for some reason this combination really works well."

The release of their second album *To Behold* on Stony Plain Records in late 2011 marked another step in the band's evolving sound and it led to their Juno Award for Best Blues Album in the spring of 2012.

*Tiger In Your Tank* came together relatively quickly in the studio to get out their calling card so the band stuck closer to their roots without a lot of tinkering. In contrast, *To Behold* involved a lot more pre-planning with road-tested tunes as Steve observes:

"I really prefer the sound because it was done in the studio of our producer, Ken Friesen, using a lot more analogue equipment. We spent about a week in the basement getting all the compositions together and recorded those nine tracks in two days, adding the lyrics at the end. We took a lot more risks and put a lot more of ourselves into this album. Near the end Ken and I came up with the Hank Williams tune."

Williams's song *You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)* is the lone cover, given a new treatment with a wailing harmonica and springy guitar chords that take it far beyond its country origins. But that's only a hint at the album's eclectic pace, from soul grooves to darker ballads (like the more spontaneous creation *Let Her Down*) and tracks that benefit



from Steve's use of the Wurlitzer or the Hammond organ.

Tony D. offers the album's opening number, *Mother's Crying* (inspired by Robert Johnson), as an example of the looser feel they hope to keep exploring.

"It's always going to sound like the blues because that's how we play but there are other influences starting to sneak in there. It's becoming a little more soul and roots oriented beyond the straight blues and there's some rock'n'roll in there, too. I grew up with that so I can't ignore it. But I think the blues today is going through another change in the way that it changed in the 1960s and we're heading in a new direction, too. I think we're trying to achieve more of a raw sound."

For Tony D. (that's Diteodoro) the blues was "an aching feeling" that first pulled him in when he saw some live blues in his mid-teens. "I don't know if I chose it or if it chose me. I don't know how to explain it."

He enjoyed a long experience with bands in the Ottawa area before MonkeyJunk, and Steve now calls him "the godfather of the Ottawa scene". One of those bands included Matt for seven years.

Matt started a little late, taking up drums for fun at 18. He was inspired by his younger brother's band and was soon enlisted to drum with that group.

Steve got into Chuck Berry and Chicago blues from seeing *The Blues Brothers* movie. He took up the harmonica at 11 and met Tony and Matt when he was 13.

Catching the trio onstage you see how they obviously enjoy working together and that spills over into the audience, too. While the two guitarists find some tasty interactive moments messing with a range of instruments, they have also learned to compliment each other. As Matt puts it, "Steve thinks like a bass player".

Steve argues that they have all paid enough dues to look beyond the blues.

"Sometimes there's this pressure from the blues purists that's bred into you to keep carrying the torch for the blues. I had a kind of awakening to realize that it's OK to like other kinds of music. There's still that expectation hanging over things when we play something more outside the blues idiom but I feel confident that whatever we come up with will be something true to ourselves, something that sounds like us."



Staff Benda Bilili

## Kinshasa Calling

**Once social outcasts living on the streets of one of central Africa's most violent cities, Staff Benda Bilili rose to world music prominence. This is a story of miracles and wonders told by Tony Montague.**

The rise to international stardom of Staff Benda Bilili reads like a very contemporary version of an ancient African miracle tale. Just a few years ago the band's four original musicians—who are all childhood polio victims, and paraplegic—lived rough in central Kinshasa, often sleeping on flattened cardboard boxes.

The teeming capital of the huge and turbulent Democratic Republic of Congo is a dangerous place for anyone with a disability to spend the night in the open. But there was little choice for them and other handicaps, as they're known, unable to find work. Though the four guitarists were fine musicians and singers none could get hired to play. So once a week they'd pedal their hand-built tricycles to the grounds of the city zoo to make music together that mixed Congolese rumba and soukous with touches of reggae and old-style rhythm and blues. Staff Benda Bilili was discovered by French cineastes Renaud Barret and Florent

de la Tullaye in 2005.

"We rehearsed in the place in Kinshasa where the two whites went to eat, and they heard us and said, 'Oh, you guys work really well together,'" says drummer Montana, one of the band's three non-paraplegic musicians, reached by cellphone in a bus taking the band to Boston on its first tour of North America.

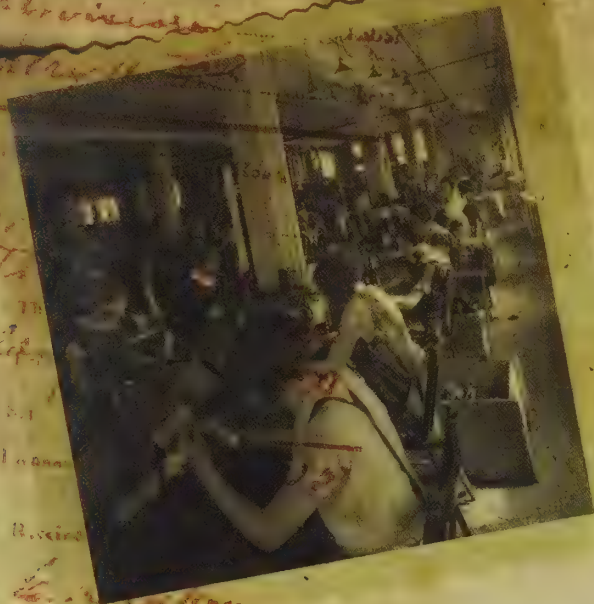
"In 2009 they brought us to the Eurockéennes Festival in Belfort [France]. Everything happened from there." In their acclaimed documentary *Benda Bilili*, which premiered at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, the filmmakers caught the extraordinary culture shock and ecstatic communication between the musicians and a western audience that knew nothing about the group or its origins.

The handicaps are known for their education, loudness, fearlessness, and powerful 'syndicate', and form the second largest group of street people in Kinshasa—out-numbered only by the more than 40,000 sheges, runaway or abandoned children who somehow eke out an existence. Many sheges benefit from the protection and help of handicaps.

Staff Benda Bilili's extraordinary secret weapon is former shege Roger Landu, who in his early teens created his one-string lute,



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the satonge, from a guitar string, a tin can, and a piece of wood.  
"I came to know the group in 2003, and grew up with them," the 24 year-old Landu says, given the phone and speaking in French with a strong Kinshasa flavour. "They'd all heard about Roger, a street kid who lived in the open and played music. I appreciated what they did. I hung out with the group and really got to know their music."

"At one time I had the opportunity to get close to Ricky [Likabu, leader and singer] to learn from him how I could evolve, because it's our old people who can do this," says Landu, who plays his instrument by tensing the string between the can's drum and a wooden bow inserted in its base, plucking with one hand while the other manipulates the bow.

"He said, 'Come on, Roger, you need to find the right setting for your instrument, the right direction in which to take it'. I didn't expect to hear all the good things that he said. It was surprising to me. He said that I'd make it big eventually—tomorrow, or the day after. I was happy about that."

SBB's debut album *Très Très Fort* was three years in the making. Its recent follow-up, *Bouger Le Monde*, lives up to the punning French title, and is both a call for people to dance and shake and a cry for movement and change in the world.

"The music is even better because of the experiences we have had in the past few years," says Likabu, handed the mic. The members of Staff Benda Bilili speak through their music and are men of few words—in interviews anyway. Asked how things have changed back home for him and the others since their extraordinary success, Likabu responds. "It's changed our lives in major ways. We now have a house and a car—and the children go to school."

Then he laughs, and it's impossible not to laugh with him. The energy and exuberance of Staff Benda Bilili is conquering the world. Not even the Buena Vista Social Club's tale of Cuban veterans rediscovered can match this transformative story of how a group of Congolese paraplegics and social outcasts from the streets of Kinshasa became international stars.

"In the past year we've been everywhere—Australia, New Zealand, Nouméa (capital of New Caledonia)," says Montana. "We've played in Morocco and Japan. Now I can say we've really been around the world. We hope to go to South America next year to make the people there move and shake. Next spring we're going to be in Europe again."

"It's a dream—as the film shows, we're real optimists. Staff Benda Bilili means look beyond appearances in the Lingala [language]. Then you see who somebody really is—and then you see us the same as you hear us."

Fast forward 10 days, and the musicians of Staff Benda Bilili are in a club in downtown Vancouver carving deep Congolese dance grooves into the rainy night. The frontline comprises the four members in their wheelchairs—Likabu wearing dark glasses and a trilby, the braided Djunana Tanga-Suele, Coco Yakala Ngambali, Theo Nsituvuidi—singing in sweet harmonies. On one side of the stage stands Kabamba Kabose Kasungu, animating the audience—sometimes waving one of his crutches. Behind prowls Landu, the Hendrix of the tin can, soaring into wild psychedelic solos on his amplified monochord lute.



Staff Benda Bilili keeps pouring out the party music, drawing on pretty much all the material from its two albums in the course of the evening. The last encore is a repeat of *Bouger Le Monde* and the dancers go bonkers one more time to the fast pulse of electric bass and Montana's drums. It's the signature song of a band with a message to the world that's simple, clear, and comes straight from the heart of central Africa.

## Taking Trad' To The Streets

**They call themselves Le Trad Commando—Quebecois musicians organizing impromptu traditional music sessions on the streets of Montreal and beyond. Yves Bernard catches up with its frontline troops.**

**T**hey invade public spaces, take subway stations hostage, descend upon universities, occupy farmers markets, penetrate festivals and raid official airwaves. They do it joyfully, using traditional Quebecois music as their weapon of mass tradition. Their actions are filmed and broadcast on YouTube. And they are making a real impact. Jean Desrochers and Véronique Plasse are two of this very special project's organizers.

"The idea came to us when we were in Montreal," remembers Jean. "We would take public transportation and say to ourselves that it would be fun if someone just started to play traditional music out of nowhere. We were also fans of Improv Everywhere, the New York group that organizes flash mobs doing all kinds of things. They create absurd scenes and film them. We adapted the idea to traditional music."

Jean and Véronique had just discovered a way to bring people together while showing pride in their roots. One night, they sent out emails inviting people to participate in their mission. They said, "if we manage to gather 10 people, we'll do it". On Nov. 27, 2009, Le Commando Trad is born. Nearly 20 musicians descend upon the Papineau metro station. Some of them are well known, others not, but they all remain anonymous for the occasion. Five cameramen accompany



Photo By: Alain Chagnon

them. The fiddler kicks it off, and then the others join in for *Reel Bergeville* and *Reel à Jos Cormier* on the station's two platforms. A woman laughs, people turn around and some of them stop or move to the music as they walk.

"We are traditional artists who want to disturb," states Véronique. "We ended up realizing that the project has three objectives: to bring the traditional music community together around a form of positive action that stands out and that draws attention to it, to spark the imaginations of the people we encounter, and to reclaim a place for traditional music. We are super conscious of the fact that by playing traditional music we are transmitting our culture, which is strong and which also defines our identity."

The idea is to summon the nation's collective spirit in unexpected places, and in doing so the group often has precise intentions. These intentions can be seen in their choice of the Papineau and Lionel Groulx metro stations for their missions, as they are named after emblematic Quebecois historical figures. By performing at the Université du Québec à Montréal, they wanted to claim a place for traditional music in the province's educational system: "Besides at the CEGEP de Joliette, and a little bit in Drummondville, there is practically no place for traditional music in Quebec's educational system," explains Véronique. "There are no programs that teach it at the elementary, high school or

university levels."

Despite this, Le Commando has performed in many different locations, from Mont-Royal Avenue to the heart of Montreal's Plateau district, where people played along from their balconies or blended into the crowd as it travelled to the Jean Talon market, where a storyteller eventually set up and performed on a picnic table. In Quebec City, they performed on the Petit Champlain staircase, while in Saint-Charles-Borromée the merry band stopped in at the Festival Mémoire et Racines. On another mission, they criss-crossed five different festivals from Saint-Marie de Beauce to Lafontaine Park in Montreal.

In some cases, Le Commando has accepted partnerships with events like La Grand Rencontre or Nuit Blanche sur Tableau Noir, but they have also refused some proposals. "If you knew how many invitations we have received, especially since the videos have been released," says Véronique. "A lot of people think that we are a street performance group and they want to take advantage of our entertainment value. But for us, the activist side of what we do is very important—we aren't a tourist attraction. We'll never perform simply because someone's hired us. There always has to be a message to what we do."

The musicians who participate in the missions give themselves traditional-sounding names: you may find "Ruine-Babine", "La Turlutte" or "Ronfleuse Gobeil" on accordion; "Nuit blanche" or "le Bedeau de



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The project has influenced others. In Bordeaux, Trad'Escouade has posted several similar videos. There's also Marée Trad in Brittany, Celtic Guerrillas in Vancouver and Folk Ambush in Liverpool. All of these projects involve artists celebrating traditional music in public spaces.

l'Enfer" on guitar; "Ovila Légaré" or "le père Bacchus" on mandolin; "les Charbonniers", "la Tuque Bleue", "la Pitoune Boudreault", "la Déroutée" or "Arthémise" on violon and "Monsieur Pointu" on banjo. "The nicknames help make it a very inclusive project," explains Jean. "It's like in jam sessions. You can be playing with someone who has toured around the world, while you have only played in your living room."

And then there's "Ours qui tousse" behind the camera, also known as Jean-François Dugas. "He directs the cameras during our missions and does most of the editing afterwards," explains Jean. He created a wonderful video montage of people around the world playing along with Le Commando Trad during two missions that they did at Montreal radio stations. Jean-François captures people's immediate reactions, while Jean and Véronique receive feedback from viewers after they have seen the videos. "People are generally really excited about it. The comment that we get the most often has to do with the great pride people feel. It brings some of them to tears," Véronique tells us.

And the project has influenced others. In Bordeaux, Trad'Escouade has posted several similar videos. There's also Marée Trad in Brittany, Celtic Guerrillas in Vancouver and Folk Ambush in Liverpool. All of these projects involve artists celebrating traditional music in public spaces. And what's next for Le Commando Trad? "The project's a little bit on the ice right now, but it's always been like that," explains John. "But even though there currently aren't any missions taking place, we've still got to get it out there. Once the videos are posted, they become timeless. The images are there to stay." The ideas are still flowing and other missions will eventually take place. But for the moment, Véronique and Jean are taking time out in order to take care of their five-month-old baby girl.



The Blue Warblers: Kim Beggs and Natalie Edelson

## Harmonious

**The Blue Warblers actually started out playing old-time tunes around campfires in Yukon. Twenty years later, they eventually made the aptly titled album *Pretty Good*. Doug Swanson hears how.**

Thousands of kilometers may separate Appalachia and Yukon but the two regions share a pride of place, devotion to core values and an appreciation of honest effort that shines through in the music created there. Kim Beggs and Natalie Edelson, as the duo The Blue Warblers, have tapped into that kinship with their 2012 debut album *Pretty Good*.

Like their kindred spirits in Appalachia, these two fervent Yukoners have embraced the simplicity and honesty of old-time music, with its accompanying harmonies, spare instrumentation and fundamental lyrical messages.

Kim Beggs has been at this music thing for some time and she credits her inspiration to hearing Iris DeMent on CBC Radio back at the turn of the century.

"I had never heard of her or heard her before and I was dumbfounded. It just made me sit down and ... wonder about the future, not necessarily about a music career but it just opened up this door inside my

heart," says Beggs, contacted this fall at a farmhouse in Denmark while on her solo European tour.

"And I think that it also turned on the tap of creativity and from that point on songwriting became more and more of a priority. It was her voice and her sincerity that just blew me away."

Beggs, (vocals, guitar) went on to release three solo albums (*Streetcar Heart*, 2004; *Wanderer's Paean*, 2006; *Blue Bones*, 2010) to critical acclaim and another is imminent. Natalie Edelson (vocals, banjo) also has a solo album to her credit, *Mayfly Days* in 2005. This specific musical collaboration was two decades in the making.

"Natalie and I have been sitting around the campfire for 20 years along with lots of other very good friends—Kim Barlow and Anne Marie Genest and lots of others—and I think that's where we mostly all got our start. So we've all been sharing voices for a really long time and there's a real comfort and deep friendship in that.

"Natalie is a really fantastic harmony singer so I was hiring her quite a bit to come on tour with me and support me in the Kim Beggs shows. We were finding that we were really enjoying old-time music (and I wonder if it comes out of being sick of our own music and it's just nice to be playing somebody else's tunes).

"Last January I felt like going into the



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studio to record some old-time tunes ... and then I thought, 'Gee, I wonder if Natalie would be interested in that because she has a whole bunch of tunes, too'. So I asked her ... and she was totally into it.

"We really needed to keep the budget down because this was kind of more like a passion project.... So we thought, 'Well, let's budget two days in the studio ... and then a few hours for mixing and mastering and then let's call it that'.

"And the best place to record a live-off-the-floor album, in my opinion, is a place that has a really great engineer and great equipment and that place would be Old Crow Recording with Bob Hamilton as the engineer. So we asked him about his availability and he had a few days so that's what we did."

On *Pretty Good*, which has been nominated for one Canadian Folk Music Award and two Western Canadian Music Awards, there are seven public traditional arrangements such as *Bury Me Beneath the Willow* and *Banks of the Ohio*, three covers and three strong originals, two penned by Edelson and one by Beggs. Jesse Zubot lends his fiddle, Bob Hamilton picks mandolin and helps with production, and George McConkey plays harmonica.

Natalie Edelson was tracked down on the town square at Sarria, Spain—with the cathedral bell ringing in the background—three weeks into a hiking tour following the Camino Santiago de Compostela, a religious pilgrimage route marked by signposts and painted arrows on walls, sidewalks or even just rocks by the roadside. She offered some insight into how the duo was conceived.

"The Blue Warblers came out of some of the old-timey stuff that Kim liked and then different old-timey stuff that I liked. There's a lot of cross over. We both loved Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, for example, and the music of Appalachia. So we just decided to make a recording as a duo based on the songs that we loved."

Edelson became acquainted with Dickens and Gerrard in the mid-'90s.

"I was so struck by how they sang together. I hadn't heard women sing like that before. As somebody that has an alto voice, it very much resonated with me. While I love the higher female voices singing together as well, it's not what I

bring to this musical world," she says, chuckling.

"To hear voices like Hazel and Alice singing together in that high lonesome, coal-mining [style], it sounds as old as the hills. I was very moved by that and I felt, in a way, it was a bridge to me discovering and moving into my own voice."

Living in a rugged environment helps reinforce one's connection to Mother Earth, Edelson believes.

"A parallel I can see between Appalachia and the Yukon, for me personally, is an aspect of proximity to land. A lot of those Appalachian songs are about regular life, about what it was like to work and live near coal mines, those types of things. For me in Whitehorse, I live pretty close to the land—I live off-grid, I chop wood, I haul water, I don't have electricity. And even though certain aspects of my life are quite urban, like my other [musical] work, I still feel connected to a slower-paced life."

And it is that pace of life that has kept both Beggs and Edelson rooted in their chosen northern home. Edelson explains:

"Twenty-one years ago when I first went up to the Yukon one thing that really struck and resonated with me was how many people completely loved where they were living. That was different from where I came from. It's not just pride of place but it's also a pride of lifestyle, where people still take time to grow community and ask each other how they are. It might not be people you know that well but you know enough about them to stop in the street and have a conversation."

During the long, cold winters there is plenty of time for music and conversation.

"I think the natural crests and troughs, or extremes of light and dark, and warm and cold, allow for that pace of life. It's a very good pace of life for people who want to undertake creative work, regardless of whether it's music or something else."

A sophomore album is likely from this complementary duo, and Edelson is thrilled to have made a connection with people through *Pretty Good*.

"The music Kim and I make with The Blue Warblers does resonate with people.... I find it exciting, in a way, that sometimes when you are finding authenticity in your own life and expressing that, sometimes that does resonate with people."



## Gypsy Tail Wind

Sam Lee learned traditional songs at the source—from the Travellers and Gypsies he sought out around Britain. Lee is one of those watch-this-space musicians, predicts Ken Hunt.

London-born Sam Lee is on the cusp of something. His thankfully delayed debut by the name of *Ground Of Its Own*—thankfully delayed since it permitted the mixture to marinate longer—has worked its voodoo and attracted the right sort of attention in the media. *Ground Of Its Own* has had excellent reviews and he and it have received nominations for various awards for 2012 back home in Blighty. The first overtures for European festival work in 2013 are already in.

The image of the well—and its counterpart metaphor of the wellspring—figure strongly in Europe and beyond when talking about traditional folkways. We draw from the well. We go to be refreshed or replenished. Some people even decorate them. Sometimes we go there and find the waters polluted or poisoned. Lee's music making gives cause to refocus attention on that figurative well.

One aspect that exercised and energized the late Peter Bellamy hugely concerned this beast called folk music not feeding on itself—for example, revivalist recordings—like some folk Ouroboros swallowing its own tail. Instead, Bellamy counselled learning from source singers.

Ray Fisher had the wit to take this principle one step back and beyond by studying with Jeannie Robertson (1908–1975), by 1960 unscientifically dubbed “the World's Greatest Folksinger”. Likewise, Lee studied with her nephew Stanley Robertson (1940–2009). Both were members of Scotland's much-intermarried, byname-strewing and frequently vilified Traveller society. That initial capital is important, for Gypsy and Traveller signify and signal different tribes of humanity, whereas gypsy and traveller suggest lifestyle and/or commercial choices. While Gypsies and Travellers both had superficially similar oral cultures, similarly prized song, story and lore, and spoke cants overlapping with borrowings, they are peo-

ples apart from mainstream society, though similarly persecuted and shunned.

Talking before singing in the Theatre Uncut program at the Young Vic in London in November 2012, Lee recalls meeting his guru and guide: “I arrived in Stanley's life at a really interesting juncture. He had no idea that I was a singer, had never heard me sing and nobody told him I was a singer.” In early 2007 he suffered a heart attack and a stroke. “He lost his speech; he was unable to walk. In that convalescence he called, and sought back to, his ancestors and reconnected with the family spirits. Retrieved a lot of the songs, a lot of the stories and a lot of the lore. And recovered completely. A full stay of execution. Came out of it much stronger and a much better singer with loads more songs.”

Acutely conscious of the value of his knowledge and with “this new lease on life”, he took Lee under his wing and invited him to Aberdeen. “There was a great sense of how to put the song out there, how to source it from yourself, how to source it from the ancestors. But actually I think, more important, what Stanley offered at first was the belief in the music. I had to

meet him and spend time with him, with a real traditional singer, with a source singer, a tradition bearer to realize that the songs were not dead.

“Until that point I don't think I was quite convinced it was a living tradition. Everyone I'd learned the songs from, and was fascinated by, was dead and gone. For the first time I saw a song within the oral tradition in its live state. For me, it made me realize that actually the songs are all alive and the invigoration of the song within you doesn't have to come directly from the source singer: it can come from anywhere. It helped, for me, to unleash that sense of continuity, of where each song comes from in each person, and the chain.”

An example of the chain is the collaged *My Ausheen My Old Shoe* on *Ground Of Its Own*. Under the title *She's Only My Old Shoes* – ausheen, he clarifies, is Traveller cant for ‘old shoe’ – it was one of Robertson's own performances on a private cassette tape that he handed Lee in late September 2006 at the Musical Traditions Club in London. Yet the album's band arrangements brazenly light out into other territories in a maybe-yes-maybe-no, post-



Sam Lee



**“The English Folk Revival hasn’t really touched me. It’s not music I listen to and I go, ‘Oh! Wow!’ Shirley Collins I see regularly. She’s like my grandma. But she knows as well as I do, I don’t listen to her music. It’s not my music, it’s not my style.”**

**– Sam Lee**

Jim Moray *Sweet England* kind of way.

However, the koto ‘exotic guitar’ sonorities on *London Lights* on the 2012 *London’s Calling* anthology—not from the *Ground Of Its Own* sessions—still reinforce the watchword about the signals you give off. Just because you can doesn’t mean that you have to...

“To have learned from Stanley,” he reflects, “and subsequently to have learned from other traditional singers and spent time with them, I feel now as though the communication is about giving the audience an insight into the journey that the song has taken. The song can do the communication for you. You’re just the vehicle,

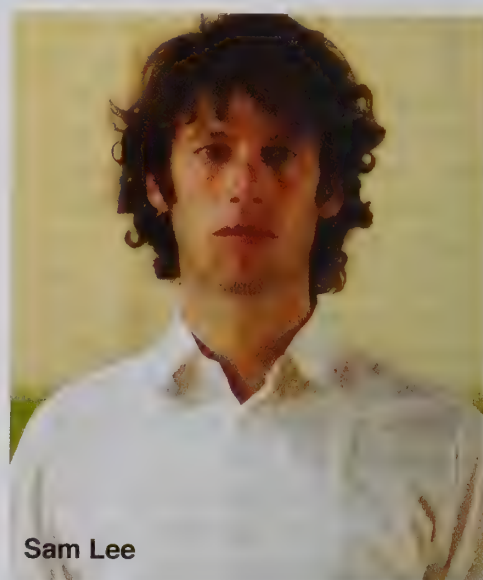
the vessel, the... em...” Vassal? “Yeah!” he splutters. “The vessel and the vassal.”

His driving influences remain Traveller and Gypsy music and culture. The Southern English Gypsy singer Freda Black is the prime example. “I haven’t spent a minute with her that hasn’t been recorded. She’s fine with that and it doesn’t change the relationship. It’s just something that happens in the background.”

As to the Folk Revival and its effect on him, he is candid: “Musically it doesn’t inspire me. I don’t listen to the music of the Revival. I think the work [documenting and collecting] that Hamish [Henderson] and Peter Kennedy did is really fascinating, but for music of the ’50s and ’60s I’d rather listen to other stuff. The English Folk Revival hasn’t really touched me. It’s not music I listen to and I go, ‘Oh! Wow!’ Shirley Collins I see regularly. She’s like my grandma. But she knows as well as I do, I don’t listen to her music. It’s not my music, it’s not my style. I look at other places for my musical inspiration but I value [the Revival] im-

mensely because of thinking, ‘Well, if it wasn’t for them, where would I be?’ I’d be in an empty world with nothing happening. I’m grateful for it but at the same time it’s not my church, not my religion.”

Sam Lee is one of those watch-this-space musicians. He is going to be around for a long time, for the long term.



Sam Lee



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## Great Capers

**Best of pals forever, Mary Jane Lamond and Wendy MacIsaac finally make a duo album rooted in Cape Breton's Gaelic songs and fiddle traditions. Kristin Nord provides the kudos.**

There's been no denying the chemistry between Mary Jane Lamond and Wendy MacIsaac, two musicians who have lit up whatever stage they have shared with their artistry and their humour. Until now, however, MacIsaac has been content to be an ensemble player. Their fine co-produced new album, *Seinn*, (pronounced Shane and translated from the Gaelic as "to sing or play a tune") makes their partnership official.

The impetus for the album came from a tour the two embarked upon in 2010. Lamond usually travelled with a five or six-member band but this time, "I had some gigs booked out west and wanted to do them with a smaller group backing me up," she said. MacIsaac had been a band member from the mid-1990s when Lamond's voice first took the music world by storm. They'd clocked many hours on the road and many hours of playing time.

"On that tour it turned out Wendy and I increasingly were splitting the shows between fiddle and song. "Afterwards we decided we'd like to base an album on that approach—and have something we could later take on the road."

They laid the original tracks with two guitarists they worked with regularly, Brad Davidge and Seph Peters. Then over the next year and a half, the two women began to play with their basic material.

"We'd say to ourselves, 'Wouldn't it be great if we had so and so on this cut,'" MacIsaac said, and they set out to recruit musicians who make guest appearances. Lamond signed up Irish doyennes T and the Maggies for the chorus on the Blue Mountain's *Lullaby* the morning after a joint performance in Ireland. Others players were recorded in Scotland, Australia, as well as Canada. "We wouldn't have been able to do this even a few years ago," Lamond said, looking back on it. "Thanks to the wonders of technology we got what we wanted."



Mary Jane Lamond & Wendy MacIsaac

From MacIsaac's effervescent *Yellow Coat* set, a bracing blast of Cape Breton and Irish tunes on the opening track, to the modern setting of *If You Were Mine* on the concluding track 12, the album flows organically. These two musicians display an uncanny knack of either matching the emotional content of each other's playing or furthering the musical conversation.

Over the years Lamond has used her background in Celtic studies to plumb various archives; and she has turned to a number of older Cape Breton Gaelic singers to build upon her repertoire. Here she showcases a number of rarely performed gems—along with a lovely contemporary song composed by Brian ó hEadhra (*Anam*) and *Goiridh mac Alasdair Dhùghaill* (Jeff MacDonald), Lamond's friend and neighbour. In each offering Lamond searched for strong melodies and often equally strong rhythms. In *The Thief Song*, set to great effect with jazz pianist Kim Dunn and cellist Kevin Fox, her formidable dramatic gifts come forward.

"I'm really a folksinger, with a touch of the method actor," Lamond said, with characteristic understatement.

MacIsaac brings an august pedigree to the equation. Reared in the Scots Catholic culture of Inverness County, Cape Breton, she absorbed the Gaelic inflections of the music from Gaelic-speaking grandparents as well

as the rhythms as a young stepdancer. She plays in an old Cape Breton style that has hints of the Great Highland bagpipe in its embellishments, but from years of touring she has been exposed to many other traditions as well. In *Seinn* she steps out from under the traditional Cape Breton moniker, not afraid to include Irish tunes in her sets or to mix up her new compositions with Cape Breton standards. She enlists Seph Peter's delicate guitar set to Irish tunings on some tracks. She calls on friend Tim Edey's accordion to conjure her young son Angus's encounter with strange sounds in their new house.

Lamond and MacIsaac's "straight" tracks prove equally compelling—whether it's the homage to the valley outside Lamond's Cape Breton window or MacIsaac's ram-bunctious romp (*The Angus Blaise* set) with cousin Ashley and Beolach bandmate Patrick Gillis that pits three of Wendy's new tunes with two cherished classics. Recorded in MacIsaac's Halifax living room ("with my headphones off," MacIsaac reports), it has all the drive of an Inverness County house party.

Lamond and MacIsaac made decisions jointly on everything, whether it was the pairing of song and follow-up tune, or deciding to add Peters's banjo playing on two tracks for texture and colour.

"It was wonderful to share the burden of



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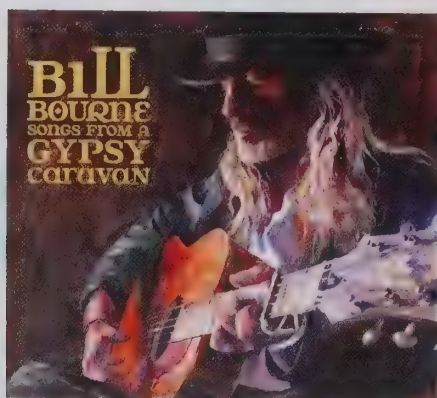
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the work,” Lamond said. And their collaboration has been spot on; from the moment *Seinn* has gone out the door, “the response has been terrific”.

Joella Foulds, executive director of the Celtic Colours Festival, is among the early enthusiasts. “I’ve watched these two for a long time, and also been waiting for Wendy to step out a little from the shadows. People in the industry have known for a long time what she is capable of, but she’s deeply humble. She’s got the whole Cape Breton thing—‘you don’t crow about it’.”

Foulds has just signed the two to headline the Cape Breton segment of the Temple Bar Traditional Festival in Dublin in January. “We’ll be building our show around Mary Jane and Wendy,” she said, “and then heading to Glasgow to perform at Celtic Connections.”

In addition to major gigs in Ireland and Scotland, they’ll be performing at the CelticFest Vancouver in March, MacIsaac said, and are setting up tour dates for the west coast of the United States to follow.

“We’ll be doing a lot of performing in the next year, and I’m really looking forward to taking this new material on the road,” MacIsaac said. The touring band, in addition to Lamond and MacIsaac, will include Peters and Cathy Porter, their talented longtime percussionist. “One of the things we love about touring together is that we all love trying new things. It’s going to be a lot of fun to see the shows grow and evolve.”

## Sing Out!

**Dave Gunning’s songs give voice to the downtrodden and salute the pride and values of hard-working folks. Sandy MacDonald catches up with one of the defining voices of Maritime music.**

On a lazy Sunday morning, Dave Gunning pulls up a chair in a Halifax coffee shop to chat. The acclaimed Nova Scotia singer/songwriter is on his way home to his wife and kids, still a couple hours down the highway. Looks like he could use the caffeine boost for the next leg of the road trip home.

Gunning and his bass player, Allie Bennett, look like a couple of rumpled



Dave Gunning

long-haul truckers, bleary eyed but happy to be heading home after a concert the night before in Lunenburg. Nestling the warm coffee mug in his hands, Gunning mirrors the cover art of his new album, *No More Pennies* (Wee House of Music).

The affable singer/songwriter is touring his new album to appreciative crowds across the country. The project is his strongest and most consistent collection of songs yet, pulling together a dozen beautifully crafted new tunes, mostly co-writes with other prominent Canadian songwriters including David Francey, George Canyon, Lennie Gallant, Bruce Guthro, Jamie Robinson, Scottish musician Karine Polwart and Pictou County’s Jim Dorie.

It’s a co-operative creative process that suits his personality.

“I really enjoy co-writing,” says Gunning, 39. “Writing by myself can be lonely. I write better quality songs when I am co-writing. I enter into a relationship with the co-writer and I don’t want to let my partner down—so I think I work harder.”

Over the years, Gunning has also hunkered down to write songs with James Keelaghan, Rose Cousins and J.P. Cormier.

“I’m fortunate there are so many songwriters I admire who are willing to co-write with me. To me, they’re just songs and I want to do what’s best for the songs.”

These new tunes are well served. Gun-

ning has emerged over the past 15 years as one of the defining voices of East Coast songwriting, joining his musical heroes Stan Rogers and John Allan Cameron as chroniclers of life on the right coast. He writes poignantly of the simple joys and common struggles many face in Atlantic Canada.

“When I started out doing this, writing songs about local stories, I didn’t believe I would be able to play outside the Maritimes.”

Now with a 2012 Juno Award (Best Roots & Traditional solo album for his John Allan Cameron tribute album), a pair of 2011 Canadian Folk Music Awards and a handful of East Coast Music Awards, Gunning is garnering national recognition for his stellar songwriting and charismatic live shows.

*Coal From The Train*, co-written with Guthro, tells the tale of a hardened railway man with a quiet heart of gold, tossing a few chunks of coal over the side of the train to the poor folks living along the tracks or digging a few spare coins from his pocket at the liquor store. The tune rumbles along with a propulsive acoustic bass and percussion, punched up with banjo.

Gunning goes searching for the soul of frozen pond hockey in *A Game Going On*, co-written with David Francey. The friends started the tune at a Celtic Colours Festival in Cape Breton but never quite got it fin-



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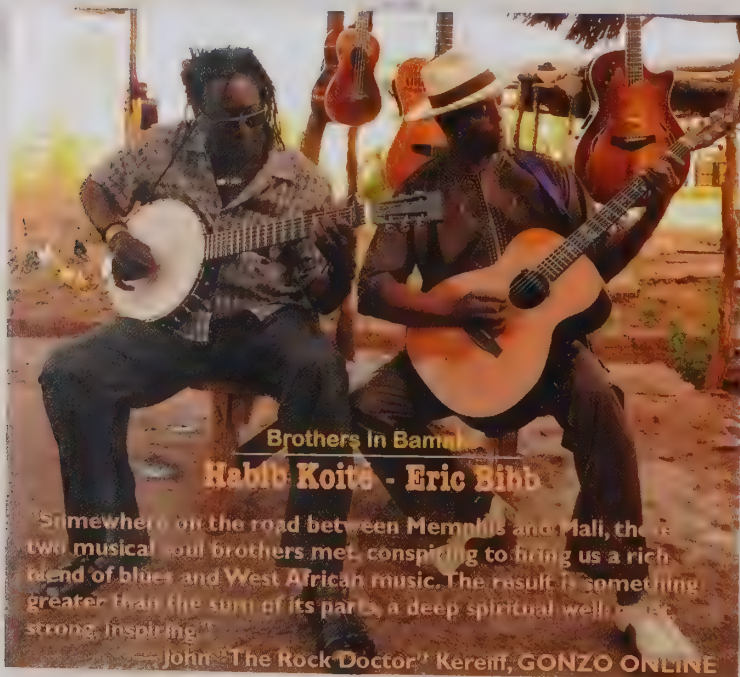
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## Tubthumping

ished. The song lay incomplete for years, just scraps of lyric and some chords sitting in a notebook.

"I put the song together for a demo for this record and sent it to (Francey) and asked if he'd sing it with me on the album. He said sure."

Gunning says the frequent co-writes bring a variety to the music, offering up different "shades" of his songwriting. His easy personality and faith in the power of the songs draw others to work with him.

Gunning also has the luxury of recording tracks at his own Wee House of Music studio in Pictou County in northeastern Nova Scotia. He enlisted his frequent collaborator Jamie Robinson to produce—the pair has done six albums together and has the recording process down pretty cold.

"We're long past that awkward first-date stuff," laughs Gunning. "We just roll up our sleeves now and get to work." The years collaborating have forged an understanding that if a song isn't clicking in the studio, they don't hammer away at it.

Robinson is an unsung musical force in Atlantic Canada, an A-list sideman for Jimmy Rankin, The Rankin Family, Rita MacNeil, Bruce Guthro, Lennie Gallant, Deric Ruttan and Cutting Crew.

Gunning envisaged a warm, rootsy sound for this project, with upright bass, frailing banjo, mandolin and lots of warm acoustic sounds. Robinson's production and accompaniment on guitar, mandolin, banjo and keys provides an intimate setting for Gunning's earnest voice.

"That's the earthy acoustic sound a lot of my supporters like who come out to my live shows. And it's the sound that I like."

One of the standout tracks from the new album is *These Hands*, a co-write with his boyhood pal George Canyon. The pair grew up together in rural Pictou County, long before Canyon had taken his stage name.

"That song used to be a different song called *Some Hands*," recalls Gunning. "George recorded it but it was a love song and didn't really suit what I do. I had watched a Pete Seeger documentary after playing the Windsor Folk Club and was so moved by it that I really got into Seeger's music for a while."

Gunning revisited the song and changed it to something that would suit his style better, "more of a call to action, Pete Seeger-style tune that could be sung in a crowd."

"Everyone wonders if they are on the right track, if there's more they could be doing," explains Gunning. "And that song asks that basic question."

To celebrate the inspirational message of the song, he has written a companion children's book called *These Hands*, with illustrations by Nova Scotia musician Meaghan Smith. Proceeds from the book are being donated to the IWK Children's Hospital in Halifax.

The lanky musician lives in rural Nova Scotia with his school teacher wife Sara and three young sons, with deep roots in the region and an appreciation for the heritage of his people. Over the course of seven studio albums he has penned a canon of songs that trumpet the pride and values of hard-working folks of the east coast. Those values just come naturally to the well-grounded musician.



"I just know what I know," shrugs Gunning. "I grew up there and still live there now."

"One thing I love about living in a place you grew up is that you're not gonna bullshit the old people who watched you grow up. They've known me since I was a little kid. Now I play 200 shows a year and a lot of those people I see in the grocery store don't even know I've left town!"

"That keeps a person grounded."

## Curran Affairs

**Three years after Hunter Hunter earned Amelia Curran a Juno for Roots and Traditional Album of the Year, she returns to the fray with a new disc, *Spectators*. David McPherson sits down for a catch-up.**

Folk music fits Amelia Curran fine, thank you very much, even if her records don't always fit neatly into this box.

"You would have to drag me kicking and screaming from the folk world," she says. "That's where I am self-identified. That doesn't mean my music will always be strictly 'folk music,' but I hope that even if I started rapping I would still be welcome."

I meet the folkie at Six Shooter Records' office in downtown Toronto, located a song away from the Queen Street strip home to such venerable music venues as the Horse-shoe Tavern, The Rivoli and The Cameron House. Curran and I exchange greetings, and then get down to business in the cosy boardroom of the third-floor office. On the wall across from me a bookcase is lined with CDs of the artists that call this indie label home. Along another wall sits a leather coach, currently the resting place of a Larrivee acoustic guitar just waiting for someone to pluck its strings.

After some small talk, Curran and I sit face-to-face at the mahogany table in the centre of the room to chat about her latest disc, *Spectators*, which was released Oct. 2. The 10-song collection, most of which were written on Curran's beloved 1965 Guild M-20, is the long-awaited follow-up to the Juno Award-winning *Hunter Hunter* (2009). It's also part of Six Shooters' fall new-release spree dubbed The Autumn of Awesome. Partly blame all this pressure for



why it was three years between recordings. And, partly blame the comforts of home.

Most leave the hustle and bustle of the big city to clear the clutter from their minds and focus on recording (Think of famed rural locales such as Bearsville Studios in Woodstock, NY). For Curran, it was the opposite. She planned to record this record at home in Newfoundland, but found there were too many distractions in St. John's.

"I'm probably the only person in the world who goes to Toronto for privacy and quiet," she laughs. "I found it difficult to work at home because I was so pleased to be home."

With the disc's foundation tracks already laid, Curran journeyed to Toronto, sublet an apartment she found on Craigslist, and hooked up with producer John Critchley. Six Shooter Records President Shauna de Cartier brought Curran and Critchley (the ex-member of '90s alt-rock band 13 Engines and owner of Green Door Studios) together. While the two were unfamiliar with each other's work at first, they immediately clicked.

"We met and two days later we were in the studio," Curran recalls. "I was still scrambling to write songs but once we connected, the record was done in a couple of weeks."

Critchley's vision was to try to increase the size of the peaks and valleys of the

music around Curran's voice and guitar.

"I wanted to broaden the tonal palette by adding other instruments like horns, strings, electric guitar, drums and percussion," the producer explains. "I hoped this would help expand the overall range and mood of the album without ever obscuring the songs or Amelia's presence."

Curran's songs lean more to philosophical poems than to political commentaries. Through carefully crafted lyrics, she asks open-ended questions and explores universal themes such as restlessness, helplessness, loneliness, and love. "Not that I have any answers, or need any answers, but it's important to ask," Curran says. "Sometimes I don't know what I'm talking about; I know, but I can't explain it or describe it ... that's why I make albums I guess."

One of the more poignant of these questioning songs on *Spectators* is *What Will You Be Building?*, a song Curran wrote more than six years ago but never recorded. Fellow Newfoundlanders The Once included it on their self-titled debut. On *Spectators* Curran reinvents this track thanks to Critchley's creative vision.

"I could never settle on how to produce this song," she explains. "I brought it to John and he thought of putting horns on it; now, it's a whole other creature."

This was the first time Curran handed over the production reins to someone else.



# MERRY CHRISTMAS

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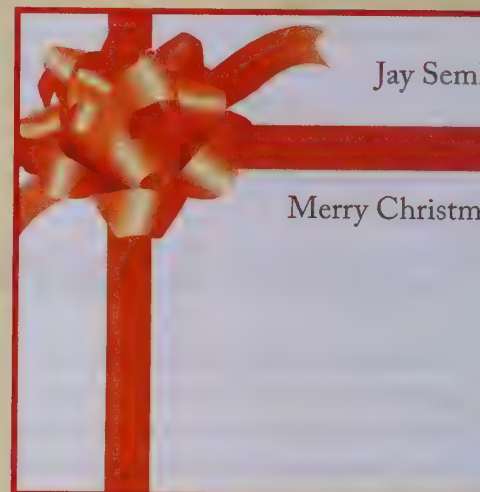
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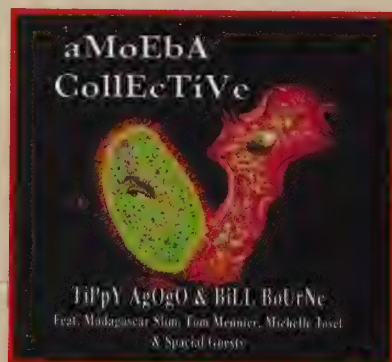
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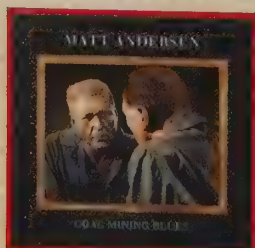
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## Tubthumping

She's thrilled she did and admits Critchley's stamp is all over the final record. For his part, Critchley had never heard the aforementioned song but it made an immediate impact.

"The song made me think of an old-time spiritual," he comments. "I thought the brass horns would add to this flavour and hopefully add to the heaviness of the song and put it in a space that would make it hard to tell what year the song was made in."

Critchley succeeded. The song feels timeless. The producer recalls how twice, during the making of the record, he left the studio for the night, and woke up the next morning to find an MP3 of a new song Curran had written waiting in his email inbox.

"The songs were completely done and fantastic," he says. "We recorded each of them exactly as she had written them ... that was very inspirational."

Toronto inspired Curran's muse. She wrote *Face on the News*, and *Strangers* while in Hogtown. "I counted on

them coming," she comments. "I needed something new for the album to feel more excited about the whole collection. Those two songs really brought it all together ... I feel great relief that it happened."

Curran is especially pleased with *Face on the News* since it's the last thing she wrote. "Any artist is notoriously fond of the last thing they did over other things," she explains. "There is a great sadness in that song but there is also a good amount of hope. That's the thing with sad songs ... in realizing the sadness, you often find the hope."

"I can't help but think by the time I see certain tragedies on the news that it is too late ... that I should have known before, and I should have done something before it's on the news," she concludes. "It's the sad realization that I'm just playing guitar and making rhymes. Sometimes I feel there has to be something else I can do ... something more effective or tangible."



Amelia Curran

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## Coming Up For Air

**Old Man Luedecke recorded his new album *Tender Is The Night* in Nashville with a crack team of session musicians—a far cry from his debut *Mole In The Ground* made in three hours for \$80, at a time he booked gigs on the computer of his local convenience store. Roddy Campbell lends an ear.**

**O**ld Man Luedecke could talk for Canada. Give him half a chance and he'll rabbit on about anything from partying with one of The Black Keys to a nerve-wracking encounter with Pete Seeger.

Solo performers who record and write on a clawhammer banjo are a bit thin on the ground around here, especially ones with

a habit of picking up prestigious national awards. So, there's lots to catch up on. Like setting the world to rights about his fab' new record *Tender Is The Night*.

This disc has a lot to live up to, of course, considering his last two, *Proof Of Love* and *My Hands Are On Fire*, each won a Juno Award for Roots And Traditional Album Of The Year. Added pressure? Well, yeah!

"I started playing music because I wanted to share what I had to say with people," says Luedecke—that's Chris to the missus. "Recording wasn't what got me into this. I wanted to play live. I'm quite good at live. But I always wanted to work on getting better on my recordings. When you decide to make a record and you've only got four or five days, there's going to be pressure. You have to peak and stay there. It's a

performance you have to live with. It's not *Rumours* [by] Fleetwood Mac, which took a year. I could have taken extra time and gone back and tried to do more. But I wanted a snap shot and a flavour of where I was at. And I feel like you get that."

All the splendid elements of Luedecke's previous efforts remain firmly intact—the warm engaging voice, cosy, memorable hooks and playful, sometimes pensive lyrics. This time, though, he headed to Nashville, TN, to record with Tim O'Brien, the celebrated mandolin player and fiddler, at John Prine's Butcher Shoppe studio. O'Brien subsequently recruited engineer David Ferguson for the project. His credits include U2 and Johnny Cash. And if we're still at the trainspotting stage, let's add the participating crack rhythm section of session percussionist Kenny Malone (Doc Watson, Dolly Parton, Garth Brooks) and bass player Mike Bub (Loretta Lynn, Del McCoury, The Chieftains). Heady company, indeed, for the pride of Chester, NS.

O'Brien, of course, played on *My Hands Are On Fire*.

"I love what he does, and I guess I'm always trying to learn," says Luedecke. "He's a wonderful solo performer and a terrific musician and a great singer. I imagined what kind of production he would bring to an album. And it was a good thing. I was hoping his ability would rub off on me, that I would learn about the way he sings and stuff like that. I'm still in awe."

Initially the game plan was to record at O'Brien's house at the beginning of January 2012, but the City of Nashville had other ideas. It started digging up the streets just as Luedecke arrived.

"They were replacing the water lines along the road so we made the record at Ferg's studio, The Butcher Shoppe, which he co-owns with John Prine. It was mostly about geography rather than going to Nashville in some larger form, you know, although, maybe there is a bit of that as well. It was more a function of geography, where Tim lived and his buddies.

"Dave Ferguson recorded those Rick Rubin and Johnny Cash [*American Recordings*] albums and brought a pretty wonderful sound to this stuff. It worked out well. Good people. It was really a friendly affair. The sessions were a lot of fun. I think you can tell."



And talk about fun ... before the recording began Ferguson and O'Brien invited their Canadian guest to a post-New Year party at the home of photographer Jim McGuire, renowned for his black and white portraits of the likes of Townes Van Zandt, Bill Monroe and Kris Kristofferson. It gave Luedecke an up-close, star-struck glimpse at some of Nashville's musical elite.

"Cowboy Jack Clement was there and Guy Clark, you know. The guy from The Black Keys, Dan Auerbach, was there. It was, 'Wow! I live in little Chester town and here I'm going to make a record and all these guys are hanging out.' Tim played fiddle and guitar with Jerry Douglas and Edgar Meyer, like for about three hours. 'OK! Right! (laughs). This is music tourism at its best'."

Dedicated to his 18-month-old identical twin daughters, Cordelia Rose and Wilhelmina Luna, *Tender Is The Night* takes its name from the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Appropriately enough, Fitzgerald lifted the title from a line in John Keats's poem *Ode To A Nightingale*. While Luedecke includes other literary references from Herman Melville, Thom Paine and Aesop's Fables, his use of Biblical allegories ... erm ... lord over such titles as *Kingdom Come*, *Jonah And The Whale* and *Long Suffering Jesus*.

"Folk music has a huge tradition of religious imagery in it. People like Gillian Welch, people who I look up to, are constantly using turns of phrase derived from religion. A lot of lyric writing unintentionally uses religious imagery and it has become folksong writing. I think on this record I'm trying new ways to say something and it's ended up sticking out a little more.

"I think there's a pretty wide breadth of references and illusions. I guess I wanted every song to be a little feast and get it to resonate on a bunch of different planes. I'm keen to have a spirituality in my music. It's an important part of expression."

The wonderful *Jonah And The Whale* opens in the unlikely locale of Fort McMurray, AB, and concludes on Highway 63, or 'Suicide 63', which runs through the heart of the province's tar sands. Indeed, Alberta provides the setting for several of his songs. A&W was written in Calgary, while visiting his sister. And the quite beautiful, heart-felt tribute *Song For*

*Ian Tyson* returns to the Longview setting he used for *Mountain Plain* found on *My Hands Are On Fire*. Tyson, Luedecke admits, is a bit special.

"I've never met him but I read his books and I've got his records and have long been a fan. I was watching that Bravo documentary [*Songs From A Gravel Road*]. It's great. There was a scene where [Tyson] goes and meets [Gordon] Lightfoot. He said, 'I'm like an old wolf in a leg trap'. I jotted it down and started writing the song while I was watching the TV show. I took that line right out of his mouth.

"I wanted to pay tribute, not just to him but to the genre. Cowboy music is the only genre that you are constantly worrying that the West is ending, right? And that things aren't the way they used to be. So that song is pretty good in that way. And the fact that we made it in Nashville, that is one of those songs I don't think would have sounded as good if I recorded it anywhere else. It came off pretty legit'."

*Little Stream of Whiskey*, however, seems a curious inclusion as it first appeared on Old Man Luedecke's debut EP, *Mole In The Ground*, now long out of print.

"*Little Stream of Whiskey*, I wanted to give it a little bit of attention. And in some ways that version of the song with just Tim is kind of how I pictured some of the album going—just the duet—but it ended up

mostly a trio. I liked it stripped down. For some reason that song encapsulates where I'm trying to get to. I like the pull of it and the light touch the banjo has in the music. I wanted an excuse to keep playing it."

Chris Luedecke was born and raised in Toronto, the eldest in a family that included two younger sisters. His father, a German immigrant, provided an initial interest in music, albeit classical. Indeed, Luedecke Sr. was once accepted into the prestigious Vienna School Of Music as a pianist. He, however, didn't consider himself good enough and opted for a life as an accountant in Canada.

"He was really tough on me as a young musician. I played piano and clarinet in school. I was quite taken with the clarinet but I didn't think I was good enough to go into [music] at university."

Still, Chris went to McGill University in Montreal from 1994 to 1998 to do a B.A. in English literature and religious studies. A week after graduation, though, he bought a clawhammer banjo and moved to Yukon. Instead of poems by Henry Thoreau and Robert Frost, he now read Pete Seeger's *How To Play The 5-String Banjo* book from cover to cover. Besides, he also fell head-over-heals in love with a local artist, Teresa Bergen.

As a child, Luedecke enjoyed the traditional British folksongs played every Satur-



Old Man Luedecke: He gave up the piano for the banjo



"Curran's sense of adventure extends to her lyrics, which are by turns philosophical and intimately personal...This is simply superb stuff."

EXCLAIM! MAGAZINE

# Amelia Curran

## SPECTATORS

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day morning by Max Ferguson on his show on CBC Radio. At university he discovered Gillian Welch, Pete Seeger, Lead Belly and, in particular, The Carter Family.

"The Carter Family's *Dreaming Tonight of My Blue Eyes* was really the song that launched me into folk music. And when I got The Harry Smith Anthology of American Folk Music that was reissued in 1997, that was my first real breakthrough with the banjo. I loved *I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground*, the song by Lascom Lamar Lumford. When I heard Lumford, here's this southern man singing in his own voice. He doesn't have that thick new country twang that a lot of bluegrass vocalists had at the time. And The Carter Family sang in a very flat manner. Their singing isn't stylized, it's natural. That was the thing that really did it for me."

When Teresa moved to Vancouver, Chris followed. There he spent a lot of time at the local library, borrowing CDs by the likes of Hobart Smith, Rosco Holcomb and the fierce Irish banjo player Margaret Berry. Indeed, his infatuation with old-time music grew to the point that a friend dubbed him 'Old Man' Luedecke. Through Teresa he met her old room mate Steve Dawson, then part of Zubot and Dawson. Their meeting would prove fortuitous.

On the move again, Teresa was accepted to the College of Art and Design in Halifax and Chris dutifully followed. Yet they would return to Yukon in 2001 for a year, riding their bikes from Halifax to Barrie, ON, and then hitchhiking the rest of the way to Dawson City. There, Teresa took up a residency at the Yukon Art Centre and Chris went to work as a production assistant at the Dawson City Music Festival. He wrote most of the songs that would appear on the modest *Mole In The Ground*, recorded back in Halifax in 2003.

"I made it for \$80. I was in [the studio] for three hours. I didn't own a tuner at the time. The banjo is in tune but the pitch is all over the place. But for me it was more serious than anything I had done in my entire life. I always felt like I was given a great gift in that I had discovered a way for me to say what I had to say. I still feel the songs on that record are as good as anything I've done. [But] I feel my ability to communicate has gotten a lot better (laughs)."

Old Man Luedecke booked his first cross-country Canadian tour in 2004 and wound up recording *Hinterland* after a night of serious drinking with Steve Dawson at his cabin in Whistler, BC. Released on Dawson's label, Black Hen Music, the timeless quality of the songs and the enthralling, rhythmic banjo flailing certainly earned a thumbs-up at *Penguin Eggs*. As our Tim Readman appropriately wrote at the time: "Like a good beer, it refreshes and, after a while, makes you feel slightly giddy. A winner."

Subsequently, Chris and Teresa moved permanently to the small coastal town of Chester, 70 kilometres south of Halifax, staying initially in a cabin owned by the mother of Jamie Junger from the Vancouver alt-rock band Bob's Your Uncle. While the rent was cheap, they struggled financially living off the pottery Teresa made and sold at the local market.

"I would walk into Chester—couldn't afford to drive our



bus—and use the computer at the convenience store to try to book gigs. And then walk back,” says Luedecke. “It was cheap enough for us to get by but it also made us work all that much harder.”

He would log almost 200 gigs a year before releasing *Proof Of Love* in 2008. Unlike its predecessor, it would feature such guest musicians as John Reischman (mandolin), Adrian Dolan (fiddle) and Dawson on various instruments. It earned Luedecke his first Juno. The news of his win came while on tour on remote Flinders Island, Australia.

“When I contacted my parents to tell them I had won, they went, ‘Ja, everybody knows’ (laughs). But for me it was a real shot in the arm because I really felt I had written some important songs, certainly important for me. I thought, ‘Well, if these songs don’t translate as good songs to other people then they are probably not good songs’. One shouldn’t put too much stock in awards but it was nice for me. It helped me relax and gain in confidence, that I wasn’t barking up the wrong tree. It was way more important to me than to the world, I’ll tell you that much.”

In 2008, 89-year-old Pete Seeger was scheduled to play a benefit concert in a high school near his home in Beacon, NY. Luedecke caught wind of this rare live appearance and he and Teresa jumped into their car at midnight after a gig in Halifax and drove 18 hours to Beacon. They arrived with five minutes to spare.

“He was brilliant. It was like he was 75 feet tall on stage and it was totally worth doing. And it was over in a heartbeat, too. Sarah Lee [Guthrie] and Johnny [Iron] were on the bill and Richie Havens. It was a fundraiser for something. And I heard somebody whisper that they’d shaken Pete Seeger’s hand out in the lobby.

“I jumped out of my chair and went into the lobby and he was eating popcorn. This is my big hero eating popcorn and reading a poster about Booker T. Washington. He really tried to avoid me, to be perfectly honest. I was really quite intimidated but screwed up the nerve to talk to him. I said, ‘Pete I’m a banjo player. I drove 18 hours to come hear you play from Nova Scotia’. He was like, ‘Oh, you must have used 90 gallons of gasoline to get here’. That was all he said. I was totally crushed. I didn’t



shake his hand or anything. I left him. I went home and wrote a song called *Little Bird* as a direct result of that.

“But he came out in the encore and said he had met a young man from Nova Scotia who said he was a banjo player and he actually took a couple of minutes to play *Old Joe Clark*. He dedicated it to me because I had driven all that way. It was quite sweet but I spent the whole of the Richie Havens show pretty discombobulated.”

With the success of *Proof Of Love*, *My Hands Are On Fire And Other Love Songs*, to give it its official title, had to be different. Luedecke wanted more of a band sound and so he recruited a rhythm section plus Tim O’Brien.

“Because I am a solo banjo player, at some level I was thinking that if I make a record in a band context it would show that my music is not just a solo banjo affair but that the songs I am writing stand in the context of a broader musical palate.”

Its captivating traditional old-time roots coupled with upbeat, contemporary lyrics earned a second Juno and, obviously, boosted his national profile. Exploring that ability to perform in a broader context, he toured with Kim Barlow and Christine Fellows as The Pan-Canadian New Folk Ensemble. Luedecke would also record with *The Deep Dark Woods* on their award-winning album *The Place I Left Behind*. But by far his most interesting collaboration consisted of an EP, *Sing All About It*, he made in 2011 with the young, six-piece string band from Montreal, Lake of Stew. It turned out to be a suitable distraction, at the time, as he had serious issues with his management. Whatever, they made *Sing All About It* in a day and released it only on the

Internet. Fans paid whatever they thought appropriate to download the seven songs. Ironically, it received a Canadian Folk Music Award nomination as Contemporary Album of the Year, which was won by *The Place I Left Behind*.

“I really loved the sentiments and the spirit of what Lake of Stew were doing. They’ve broken up now. Making that EP for me, in some ways, was a celebration. It was like, ‘Well, it’s been a kind of a tough year. But what will make me better is doing this thing. I want to do this with these people just as a pure celebration, just as a complete outlet, something cathartic’.

“We just released it digitally. We didn’t promote it per se but it seemed that people were into it. And it’s amazing where people downloaded the record, you know.”

Which pretty much brings us back to *Tender Is The Night*. But unlike his previous recordings released through Black Hen Music, the new disc came out on True North Records. Its roster includes Bruce Cockburn and Murray McLauchlan. Luedecke’s departure from Steve Dawson’s label boiled down to one simple fact: it gave him easier access to American markets.

“What I wanted was playing Stateside more. Part of going to Nashville was to fulfil that hope. I said to myself, ‘Why is it so difficult to get down there?’. And Tim’s management suggested True North—a business that really operates in the United States. ‘Maybe they have the ability to help get you what you want without sacrificing what you’ve got going in Canada. It’s a veritable label.’ So I jumped at the chance. And they seemed really supportive of the project. I feel really lucky that they are into as much as they are.”



# Buddy Miller

## The Penguin Eggs Interview



**I**t's hard to conceive of the Americana movement existing without Buddy Miller. Of course, he would never admit that, being the thoroughly humble man he is. But as a singer/songwriter, guitarist and producer, his work has played a crucial role in furthering the Americana cause, ever since he rose to prominence playing with Emmylou Harris's Spyboy band in the late 1990s.

It was the next phase of the Ohio native's career that had already been going for more than a decade, bouncing around between Austin, New York City and L.A. But when Miller and his wife, Julie—a great singer/songwriter herself—finally settled in Nashville, it wasn't long before they found themselves at the forefront of a Music City revolution, taking country music back from the major label marketing departments and reigniting its soul.

In the process, Miller had a hand in sev-

eral era-defining albums, such as Lucinda Williams's *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road*, and played a major role in Robert Plant's Americana crossover, most recently on *Band Of Joy*. At the moment, Miller is busy aiding T Bone Burnett with the music on the hit television series *Nashville* but he's also found time to fulfil an oft-postponed project of making an album with his old friend Jim Lauderdale. *Buddy & Jim* is a country duets offering in the classic sense, showcasing their strong and incredibly similar voices, sharp wit, and impeccable taste in material by other artists.

At 60, and having undergone triple bypass surgery a few years ago, Miller may show more wear and tear than some of his peers. But with everything he does, he gives hope that the true spirit of country music is alive and well. Buddy Miller recently took some time to speak to Jason Schneider from his home in Nashville.

**This new album you've made with Jim seems to be the kind of duets record that established country artists used to make quite frequently. Did you have any of those classic albums in mind when you guys set out to do this one?**

I think a little bit, because we're old enough to know those records. But we had just been wanting to do a duet record for so long. We almost did one eight or nine years ago but didn't end up having the time. It turned out that we had three days off in both of our schedules earlier this year, so we decided to just do it. What I like most about this album is that we didn't overthink it. All we really said was let's not make it too ponderous or heavy or slow. Let's just make a fun record.

**So, it was actually done all in the space of three days?**

Yeah. We recorded it in three days, and I mixed it in two, which is pretty quick by Nashville standards.

**You and Jim have known each other for a long time. Can you recall the first time you met him?**

We were both living in New York City in the early '80s. It might have been 1980, and it was a very funny time because you wouldn't think there would be all of these cats playing country music ending up in New York City, but there was this country scare going on all across North America due to, I think, some movie that was really popular. I'd left, of all places, Austin, Texas, and moved to New York to play clubs like the Lone Star Café where Delbert McClinton was playing all the time, and there was a great scene. People were moving there from all over for the same reason. Jim was one of those people, and I think he came from South Carolina, although I'm not sure. So, that's where we met. I think it was in a club called City Limits. He had his



band and I had my band, we would sit in with each other and end up on gigs together. That's how we became friends. We had the same kind of roots, I think.

**The two of you have contributed to each other's albums frequently since then but had you tried writing songs much together before this album?**

Yeah. I'd kind of quit playing for a few years in the late '80s. Jim had moved to L.A. and he eventually got me to move out there to play guitar in his band. Shortly after that I got a record deal, and we started writing a song or two on each one of my records. These co-writes would appear now and then on his records, too, so we've been writing a song or two a year together probably for the last 15 to 18 years. I'm so busy and he's so busy that neither of us really write unless we're doing a record. I'm producing a lot of records for other people and I'm on the road a lot. So we wrote a few for this record and hauled out some old songs that we love. Got a couple of his in there, and one of my wife's, and it ended up being a record.

**Was it important to start with a clean slate on this album?**

Well, we wrote two, and then there's another co-write that's kind of an older song. At first I thought, let's not even write anything for it because we don't have time. I was just trying to be realistic about getting it done. But Jim was insistent in saying, 'Give me anything you've got'. He had a couple of new songs, and I had some unfinished pieces that I gave to him, and I'm really happy with how that turned out. And I really love the cover songs we chose.

**So do I. Your versions of *Down South In New Orleans* and *The Train That Carried My Gal From Town* are terrific. Were these songs that meant a lot to both of you?**

Those are two that I brought in, 'cause I just love them. Jim loves *The Train That Carried My Gal From Town*, too. There's so many versions of it but the one that I particularly love is on one of Mike Seeger's *Annual Farewell Reunion* records from the

mid-'70s that he did with Ry Cooder. It's nothing like what ours ended up like but I wanted all the guys in the band to hear that version before we did ours. I think our version is kind of a mish-mash of a lot of versions. On the cover songs we didn't really reference anything or listen to anything. We'd just start out playing the songs on our guitars and everybody else would jump in and we'd get the tape machine rolling. The idea of doing *Down South In New Orleans* goes back to the original idea of us doing an album together 10 years ago. I wanted it to be called *Buddy & Jim Sing Johnnie & Jack*. I'm a huge Johnnie & Jack fan and there's so many songs of theirs that are perfect for us to sing. I thought that even if we only did one of their songs we could still keep that title but as the record started to take shape, we decided just to call it *Buddy & Jim*.

**What's interesting to me is how both of you have become figureheads in a lot of ways for the Americana movement but your hearts are still in classic country. How do you see the difference between those two things, or is there one?**

It's funny, when I made my first record I just thought I was making a country record. I still think it's a country record. When I was mixing and needed to make sure all of the highs and lows sounded right, it would

be a country record that I would reference. I had no idea that I was making anything other than a country record. You can call it Americana or alt-country or whatever you want but to me it's just music. You want to take your influences and turn them into something new. That's what it's all about for me, not just regurgitating something from the past and making it sound exactly like that.

You want to stir the pot with a lot of different ingredients and make something that tastes good, and different. That's what making a record is like for me, and I think Jim's the same way. He's got so many different influences that he draws from. I'm glad to be considered an Americana artist, because they embrace all the roots and new things at the same time.

**You and Julie have been in Nashville for about 20 years. When you arrived, did you have a sense that those seeds of Americana were already starting to sprout there?**

I didn't know one person when I moved to town. We just bought a house, and after a while I got a call from Hightone Records. They had a hole in their release schedule so they asked if I'd be interested in doing a record for them. I'd done a track for one of their compilations, and of course I said yes. I wanted to do a record, and I was flat



Buddy Miller and Jim Lauderdale



# VICTOR WOOTEN

Five-time GRAMMY winner, **Victor Wooten**, returns with two simultaneous releases: *SWORD AND STONE*, an all instrumental affair, and *WORDS AND TONES*, featuring female vocalists in collaboration with Wooten.

ALSO AVAILABLE:



**SWORD  
AND  
STONE**

**WORDS  
AND  
TONES**



# HEIDI TALBOT

## ANGELS WITHOUT WINGS



Heidi Talbot is one of the most gifted singers to emerge in Celtic music in recent years. Her talents were first introduced to audiences during her stint as vocalist for **Cherish the Ladies**. On her 4th solo album, she teams up again with producer and husband **John McCusker** to deliver her most engaging set yet. Featuring **Mark Knopfler**, **Jerry Douglas**, **Tim O'Brien**, **Dirk Powell**, **Julie Fowlis**, **Karine Polwart**, **Michael McGoldrick**, **Phil Cunningham** and many others.



ALSO AVAILABLE: THE L...



# BEAUSOLEIL

## AVEC MICHAEL DOUGLAS

### FROM BAMAKO TO CARENCO

"The best Cajun band in the World!" —Garrison Keillor, *Prairie Home Companion*

With flavors of jazz, blues and rock and roll, **BeauSoleil's** cross-genre appeal and instrumental prowess have earned them fans across the roots music world. *FROM BAMAKO TO CARENCO* takes its name from the cultural connection between Bamako, in Mali, West Africa, and Louisiana, symbolized in name by the Lafayette, LA suburb of Carencro.



# BELLOWHEAD

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broke. Shortly after that, I heard that Emmylou Harris was holding auditions for someone to take over on guitar from Daniel Lanois in her band. The audition went well, and things began to fall into place from there.

My first record came out around the time I started playing with Emmylou, and I gradually met and became aware of the huge singer/songwriter community in this town. It's unlike anyplace else, really. People move here from all over, and it's really remarkable. I've come to realize that more and more as I've been working on this television show, *Nashville*, on ABC with T Bone Burnett, that this town is such an amazing place to live. I've been blown away.

**As a Daniel Lanois fan, I admittedly was a little skeptical that anyone could step into his shoes with Emmylou, but you really did pick up where he left off with *Wrecking Ball* in a lot of ways. Can you describe the influence he's had on you at all?**

I actually have to block him out of mind a little bit, because he's amazing. It's funny, Dan's in town tonight with Malcolm Burn and they're recreating the *Wrecking Ball* vibe. I really want to go see that because I'm such a huge fan, I mean who wouldn't be? As a guitar player and producer he's unparalleled. I've been lucky enough to be in the studio with him, and there is a reason he's Daniel Lanois. He's incredible, so creative. When I did join Emmylou's band, that wasn't easy because I couldn't do what he does, and I didn't try to. I do what I do and I hoped that I got something of a feel of what he created. I come

from much more of a country place, but man, what a great gift it was to me to learn those songs from his perspective. It helped my playing grow a lot in ways that it never would have.

The question I've been dying to ask is, could you have ever imagined when you were starting out in the '70s that one day you'd be playing Led Zeppelin songs with Robert Plant?

[Laughs] Uh-uh man! I saw them on their first tour of the States, from like the third row at the Fillmore. I never in a million years would have expected that. It would have been more likely for me to end up in George Jones's band. Actually, my dream gig all along would have been to be in Emmylou's band. I was her biggest fan from her first record. So when that happened, that was enough for me to say, 'OK good night, I'm done'. My life has been incredible. All of the opportunities that have come my way have just been mind blowing.

**It was great to see how Robert gave you and Patty Griffin almost equal share of the stage when you played live.**

Yes, he's very generous.

**What was the overall experience you got from that tour?**

Well, he's a good friend. That's the best thing that came out of it. He's inspiring to work with, and we've been writing a lot together and working on a bunch of songs and recording them. So there may be something else down the line.



Daniel Lanois and Julie Miller

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static in the system

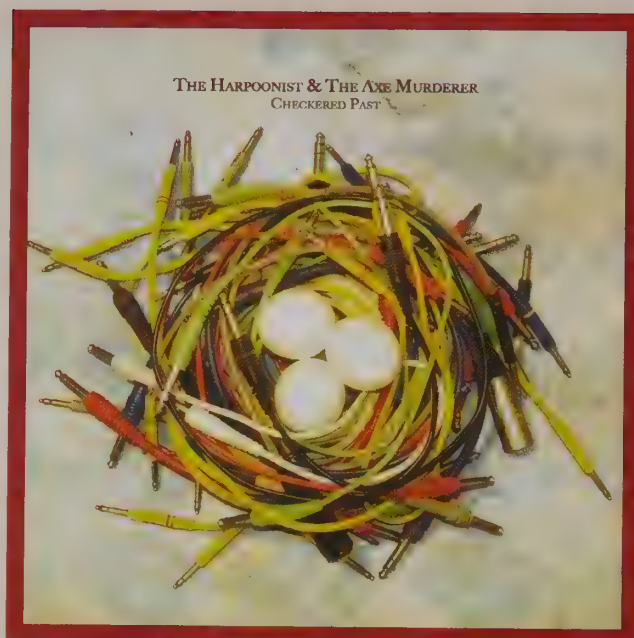
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# REVIEWS



If you're a fan of any of the many strands of Celtic music, *Seinn* is absolutely essential.  
– Mary Jane Lamond and Wendy MacIsaac, Page 57

On first listen the hairs on the back of my neck stood up more often than they were lying down. A winner from a truly marvellous singer!  
– Karla Mundy, Page 70





Beth Orton

## Beth Orton

Sugaring Season (Anti-)

When I think of sugar season I think of early spring, that grey, wet, dark-pined point in the Canadian calendar. Beth Orton perfectly captures the emotional tone of that season with this new album, her first in a fair number of years. This time out she's working with a coterie of fine experimental and folk musicians, including Laura Veirs, Marc Ribot and Eyvind Kang. Overall it's a quiet and reflective album but it starts in high gear with her raucous *Magpie*.

Other naturalistic references are scattered throughout—birds, seasons, the elements—which gives the record a remarkable sense of continuity and an almost spiritual depth. But it is the last song on the disc, *Mystery*, that is revelatory. Orton's cool-water voice floats over Kang's faintly Indie viola drones, some ripples of guitar, and very little else, proving just how damn strong a singer and songwriter she is. Welcome back, Beth.

— By Richard Thornley

## The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer

Checkered Past (Independent)

Irreverence and reverence co-exist on this exciting release by two West Coast players, Sean Hall (lead vocals and harp) and Matthew Rogers (guitar, drums, keyboards, backup vocals). A self-produced affair, it sounds like they've played together for centuries and, despite the slew of two-man bands about, this Harpoonist (Hall) and Axe Murderer (Rogers) have conjured up a convincing brand of new-school, hard-driving blues that marries new to old in an exciting fashion. Simple hooks and basic instrumentation only add to the takeaway—as if they began with the British Blues Invasion and tossed all the basics into a blender.

What comes out the other end is a baker's dozen of songs—a blend of originals to complement barely recognizable covers of Willie Dixon and the Young brothers. Deceptively simple grooves steeped in repetition but yielding fresh, invigorating results—clearly

demonstrating deep-rooted skills in both writing and arranging (and reinvention—cue Dixon's *Can't Judge A Book* and see if you recognize it as his?). A highlight song that may well be their signature piece is *Wake Up*—Hall's strong vocals (backed by Rogers's) leading a simple hook, laced with his secret weapon: in-your-face-wall-of harp-playing as Rogers deals with both percussion and rhythm guitar. Or the more traditional field holler of *Be My Woman*, slide guitar-led and chorus-driven. Simple. Solid. Satisfying, as is the entire release, transforming the old into something new again. The darker moments have greater impact than the more upbeat moments (*Chevrolet*) but to each his own. These guys have only just begun to turn things on its ear in the blues category.

— By Eric Thom

## Kristi Stassinopoulou & Stathis Kalyviotis

Greekadellia (World Music Network)

With Greece permanently in the news headlines these days its time we paid more attention to Greek music, and what better place to start than with Kristi Stassinopoulou and Stathis Kalyviotis. This duo have been together for many years, launched from the Athenian music underground, and on this album plying the waters of traditional demotika music. Settings are spare, typically a couple of acoustic instruments and electronic/studio treatments but the playing is nothing less than riveting.

The same is true of Stassinopoulou's voice, the perfect accompaniment to the album's blurred and soft-focus feel. Lyrics aren't provided so you'll have to dig them up some other way but one can't

help feel the dominant sense of loss and longing might just be perfectly reflective of what's happening in the artists' homeland. It's not quite “fuck the IMF” but perhaps a more powerful statement for all that.

— By Richard Thornley

## Mary Jane Lamond & Wendy MacIsaac

Seinn (Turtlemusik)

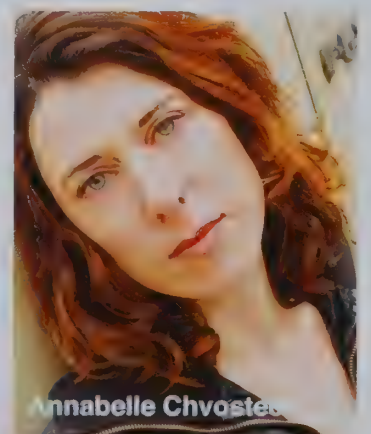
Some sublime traditional music here from two lights of the Canadian firmament. As such, they can do little wrong and, indeed, *Seinn* is a treat from start to finish. Fantastic sets of tunes featuring MacIsaac's astringent Cape Breton fiddling (and mandolin) are interspersed with Lamond's Gaelic songs. Highlights there are a-plenty: the hypnotic *If You Were Mine*, some very tasty Wendy MacIsaac originals on *Boise Monsters*, and Lamond's obligatory solo *Rinn Mi Corr Is Naoi Mile* (she does a cappella soooo well). If you're a fan of any of the many strands of Celtic music, *Seinn* is absolutely essential.

— By Richard Thornley

## Annabelle Chvostek Ensemble

Rise (Borealis)

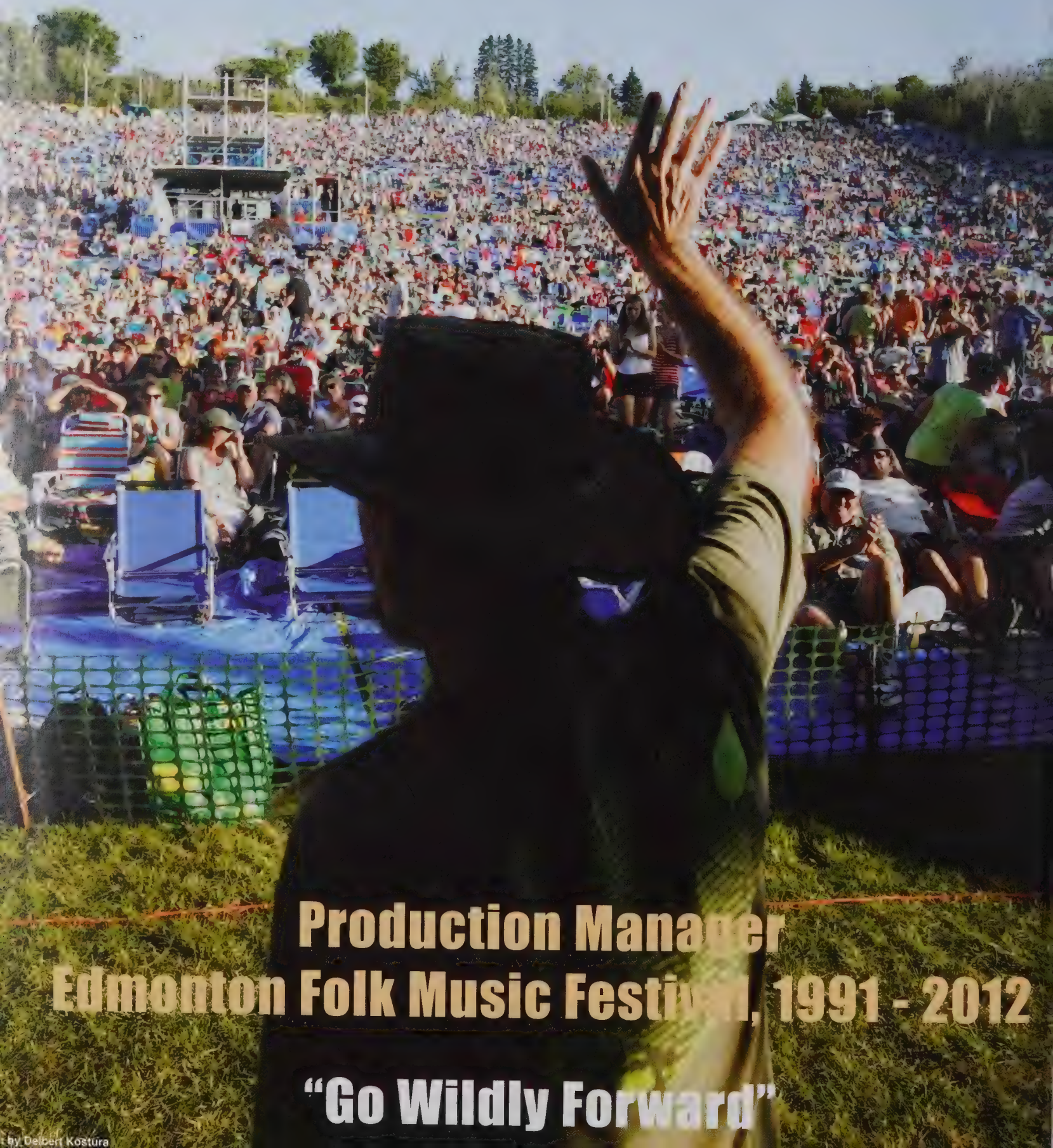
Suffused with the anger of Occupy, *Rise* is a take-no-prisoners outing for Annabelle Chvostek. Great songs, deep humanity, and a message worth





# Don Snider

11 AUGUST 1953 - 12 NOVEMBER 2012



**Production Manager  
Edmonton Folk Music Festival, 1991 - 2012**

**"Go Wildly Forward"**



hearing, there's nothing not to like about this one. *End of the Road* signals her intent, a taut acoustic rocker that proclaims, "All are equal in this / You can't beat down the truth of it with blows". *G20 Song* expresses the universal sentiment of revolution, as does Peter Tosh's formidable *Equal Rights* with which she closes out the album. Along the way there are forays into the more personal politic of *Hartland Quay* and *Fox Tail* but it's the societally political songs that I suspect *Rise* will be remembered for. The return of folk protest? Let's hope!

— By Richard Thornley

## Frank Turner

Last Minutes and Lost Evenings (Epitaph)

I've reviewed Frank Turner's work in the past and unabashedly loved it from the git go. His first solo album came out five years ago and, album by album, he has grown stronger, folkier, more focused and more polished and proficient at his craft. This fifth release, though, is a compilation of songs from past albums—not exactly a greatest-hits album but it certainly shows the power and strength of his material.

It's a great collection and would make the perfect introduction to Frank if you've never experienced him. There is not a bum song in the bunch of 15.

Now, 2012 has been a good year for Frank Turner. For one thing, he headlined at Wembley Arena in April. Pretty big deal—12,000 people in one place all singing along with his songs. And he played the show of a lifetime. How do I know? I watched the DVD of the concert that comes included with the album. That's the real reason to obtain this collection. It is an energetic, stunning and mesmerizing performance

containing 24 songs, including a terrific duet with Billy Bragg on Bob Dylan's *The Times They Are A Changin'*. I did have numerous I-wish-I-could've-been-there moments as I watched it.

And as he sings in *Photo-synthesis*, the final song of the concert, "I won't sit down and I won't shut up / And most of all I will not grow up". I love that sentiment and realize that it's hard not to love a man who can write and then belt out those words in a rousing, convincing and anthemic manner.

After listening to the audio CD and watching the DVD, I am convinced the world is a better place for having Frank Turner in it.

— By les siemieniuk

## Eric Bibb & Habib Koite

Brothers in Bamako (Stony Plain Records)

Very fine collaboration between American bluesman Bibb and Malian guitarist and songwriter Koite. Habib Koite is an excellent choice for Bibb to work with, as a strong and musically eclectic guitarist and singer. Koite had previously worked with Bonnie Raitt and is one of Africa's most accessible and talented musicians. Bibb brings his engaging and easy-going style and appealing songs together with Koite's Malian contributions with mostly pleasing results.

The album leads off with a light folky blues title song by Bibb about his travels to Bamako, Mali, to record with Koite. This approach alternates throughout the rest of the session with Koite's acoustic Malian songs, which provide Bibb an easy opportunity to provide backing vocals and guitar support. At times the two merge efforts, including Koite's Bambara translation of Bibb's previously recorded *Needed*



*Time*, and on the Malian-blues sound of *Foro Bana*. Koite's percussionist from his group Bamada, Mamadou Kone, provides excellent support on calabash and other African percussion. The recording concludes with two American folk standards, Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* and *Goin' Down the Road Feelin' Bad*, popularized by Woody Guthrie among others; Habib provides some African flavoured backing with Bibb and the American side taking the lead. Nothing groundbreaking but a pleasant meeting of two engaging musicians.

— By Jonathan Kertzer

## John Wort Hannam

Brambles and Thorns (Borealis Records)

John Wort Hannam has already proven himself a clever and resourceful songwriter on such previous releases as Black Hen's *Queen's Hotel* (2009), and *Two-Bit Suit* (2007), or even his earlier independent releases. His latest and perhaps most accomplished disc yet, *Brambles and Thorns* combines that talent with a feel for the soundscape and instrumentation of a song that brings his cre-

ations even more alive. It could be the producer, Leeroy Stagger, himself a talented singer/songwriter and veteran of Hot Hot Heat and Carolyn Mark's band, or the host of great players on the disc. Standouts include Scott Duncan on fiddle and John Ellis on an array of instruments. Either way, this is the best-sounding disc Hannam has released to date. The lyrics, too, flow with a rare facility that's great to hear in songs like *Great Lakes*, *Pretty Good* or *Dickson's Slough*. Singer Brooke Wylie also delivers a nice duet vocal on *Memphis*. A fine effort all around.

— By Barry Hammond







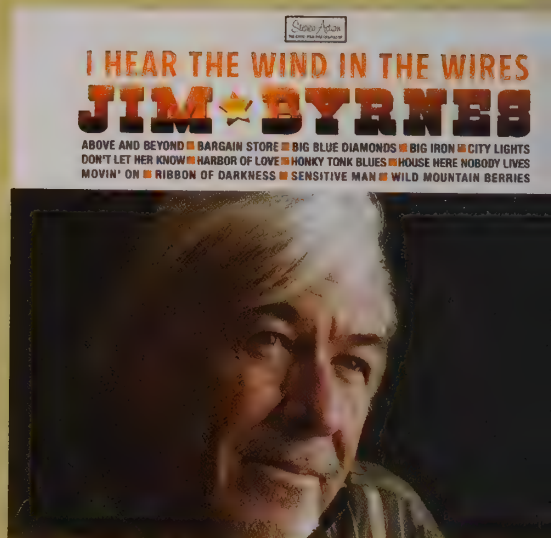
PRESENTS

# JIM ★ BYRNES

## I HEAR THE WIND IN THE WIRES



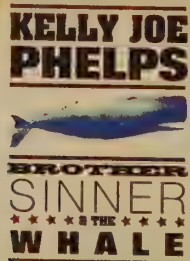
Juno Award winning blues singer Jim Byrnes walks the line between country, soul and blues on his new recording of classics by Ray Price, Buck Owens, Little Willie John, Hank Williams and more.



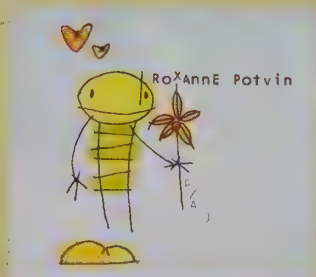
*"This just might be one of the discs for which Byrnes will be best remembered."*

- Penguin Eggs

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Cindy Church

## Cindy Church

Sad Songs Make Me Happy (Independent)

To be honest, the fourth album from Canadian folk staple Cindy Church isn't the kind of listening experience I generally seek out. Church's self-described "labour of love" is a collection of classic (and semi-classic) heart-string tuggers (plus one Church original) replete with spare, gentle arrangements foregrounding the singer's feather-light caress of a voice—in other words, it would be all too easy to relegate to the background (or to the CD changer in mom's minivan). That, however, would be a mistake. I'd have missed out, for instance, on Rob Piltch's subtly lovely nylon-stringed accompaniments throughout, Kevin Breit's shimmering National guitar on *Miss the Mississippi*, the elegant contributions of various other skilled sidepersons, and Church's shrewd song selection that balances ol' chestnuts (*Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain*) and jazz standards (*I Fall in Love Too Easily*) with some rarer gems (the Williams Brothers' *Can't Cry Hard Enough*, Vern Gosdin's *Is It Raining At Your House*). The singer's prowess is never in doubt. I'm still putting this one in my mom's CD changer—she's going to love it—but I'm glad I took the time to listen closely first.

— By Scott Lingley

## Dave Gunning

No More Pennies (Wee House of Music)

Ten albums and counting, Dave Gunning has become the quintessential Maritime songwriter. He sings of hockey, he sings of coal trains and home, and he sings of *Living In Alberta* and "dying to get back home".

*No More Pennies* is another lovely recording and features 12 original songs by Gunning and songs co-written with George Canyon, Dave Francey, Bruce Guthro, Lennie Gallant, Jamie Robinson, Jim Dorie and Karine Polwart. He keeps good company and puts their contributions to good use.

Dave Gunning can tell a story and the stories he picks to tell are terrific. *The Weight of My Guitar* is a stand out, as is *These Hands*. The arrangements of the songs are tasteful and simple—mostly guitar, bass, drums with some lovely accents of mandolin, bouzouki and uilleann pipes. *No More Pennies* is a lovely piece of work that speaks the language of Dave's home, Nova Scotia.

— By les siemieniuk

## Wool on Wolves

Measures of Progress (Independent)

The word band doesn't quite do justice to the concentration of talent evinced on the third release from Edmonton's Wool on Wolves. There's a unified musical vision at work here that defies categorization, though dyed-in-the-wool folkies should be warned of the undeniable rock orientation. The defining characteristic here is passion. Whether in the brewing storm of *Unsuspecting Ways*, underpinned by churning strings, the retro-rock-riff one-two punch of *Be the Change* and *Broken Pictures*, the brass-driven swagger of *Francis!* or the melancholy throb of the Wilco-evocative album closer *Darkest Hour*, there's an unflagging emotional intensity—backed by a knack for powerful melodies and deft arrangements—that's frankly staggering. Add this to the shortlist of independent albums from Canadian acts (in my case, local) that completely blind-side you with the thoroughness of their achievement. Next stop, stardom—or at least its Edmonton equivalent.

— By Scott Lingley

## Marcel Khalifé/Mahmoud Darwish

Fall of the Moon (Nagam Records)

This collaboration between Lebanese maestro Khalifé and the late Palestinian poet Darwish is the sort of thing that forces your mind and soul to expand just

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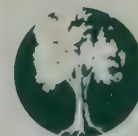
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# Reviews

to accommodate its grand artistic aspirations. That's certainly how I felt when I saw Khalifé's ensemble perform in Edmonton earlier this year but the recorded document, spread across two CDs, has given me a chance to appreciate the accomplishment in more detail, from the sprawling musical reach that both defines and redefines contemporary Middle Eastern music to Darwish's delicate yet muscular, aching yet exultant verse.

The two hours of music range over traditional Arabic ensembles led by Khalifé's agile oud to more classical-sounding works like the lushly orchestrated title track and *Waltz for Rita's Winter* (featuring the Kiev Philharmonic) to surprising incursions of Latin and jazz influences driven by guitar and piano. Honours for the most

astonishing moment might belong to the haunting *Mohammed*, starring Oumaima Khalil's unadorned voice. If your knowledge of Lebanon and Palestine only extends to the tragic headlines that define those places in popular imagination, *Fall of the Moon* is a stunning and timely lesson on the beauty and profundity that abides in their respective cultures.

— By Scott Lingley

## The Boxcar Boys

Rye Whiskey (Independent)

Toronto's The Boxcar Boys take an expansive approach to nostalgia for Great Depression-era music. The band deploys its cast of clarinet, accordion, violin and low brass (plus a guest mandolinist) on an eclectic array of traditional and original tunes that take in Tin

Pan Alley, western swing, hot jazz, klezmer and various other exotic strains that imbued popular music in the 1930s. And though their esthetic predates it, there's a dash of bluegrass work ethic at play as well. Led by the frenetic clarinet of John David Williams, the players execute tricky unison passages and free-blowing N'Awlins-style polyphony—not to mention wild Gypsy abandon—with equal aplomb and unerring accuracy, all in the absence of a conventional rhythm section. Violinist Laura C. Bates steps up to the mic to vocalize on Elizabeth Cotton's *Freight Train* (I assume that's her—there's no credit on the CD sleeve), but other than that the album is an antic instrumental free-for-all. If they're this much fun on disc, I bet the boys (and

girl) throw a helluva party at their live shows.

— By Scott Lingley

## Lynn Jackson

Down in the Dust (Busted Flat Records)

There is something hauntingly familiar about Lynn Jackson's *Down in the Dust*. Whether it's the inspired first cut *Paper Airplane*, where Jackson delivers a stellar performance, or the terrific cover of *Lawrence KS* (Josh Ritter), sliding this CD into the tray feels very comfortable. Jackson's vocals may lack some of the maturity and timbre you might hear in a Gillian Welch or Lucinda Williams performance but the tones ring clear. *Spare A Little Rain* has a smoky feel and features gorgeous bass from Mark McIntyre. Co-produced by Jackson and Cory Barnes, *Down in the Dust* doesn't break a lot

"Yes Please offers thought-provoking lyrics and powerhouse musicianship all wrapped up in a positive, upbeat record you can dance to"  
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of new ground. The majority of tracks seem more country than 'alt' to those expecting a rootsier effort but it is a well put together package by a talented artist and team.

— By Ruth Blakely

## Bill Bourne

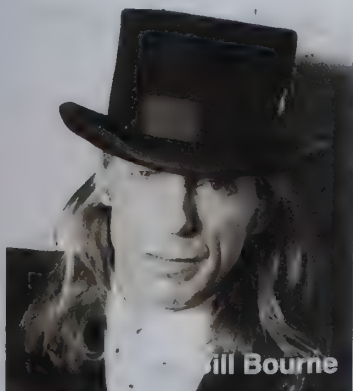
*Songs from a Gypsy Caravan* (Linus)

Bill Bourne is anything but predictable. You never know whether he'll be collaborating with an Icelandic singer, an African guitarist, a Celtic fiddler or a garage band. This time it's just Bourne, his beat-up 1969 Gibson and a bit of electric guitar and his stomp box. Oh, and don't forget that inimitable soulful voice, which he uses as another instrument.

Bourne has had numerous Juno nominations, and I'll eat my keyboard if this one doesn't get him at least a nomination. Growling out the blues-inflected songs, crying out with passion about the state of mankind, as though sexy and standing on two legs is still animal. Whether he's softly fingerpicking his acoustic or cranking out raw electric slide guitar, Bourne always has a ton of tension in his hypnotic music. And he's as fluid a guitarist as you'll find, from flamenco to blues.

Bourne has played with many of Canada's top players but this disc proves that he can stand alone, and is at his finest when he does.

— By Mike Sadava



## The Foghorn Stringband

*Outshine The Sun* (Independent)

This is the sixth release from the Foghorn Stringband in their various incarnations and we are treated to more of the same: energetic old-time, bluegrass and square dance offerings that are as true to the concepts as anything conceived by the progenitors. Or, as they describe their sound on their website, "ass kickin' redneck string band music".

In the spirit of thrift, industry and value for money—cornerstones of the old-time mindset—there are 21 tunes sandwiched onto *Outshine The Sun*. There are four selections from The Carter Family, two from the Pine Ridge Boys and one from the Stanley Brothers, as staunch bona fides as you can get.

Caleb Klauder (mandolin, fiddle, guitar, vocals), Stephen Lind (fiddle, banjo, guitar, vocals), Nadine Landry (bass, guitar, vocals), and Rebecca Willms (guitar, vocals) are tighter than wet rawhide, laying down some mighty fine foot-stompin', toe-tappin' grooves. A welcome release for any fan of old-time tunes.

— By Doug Swanson

## Ian Siegal & The Mississippi Mudbloods

*Candy Store Kid* (Eugene Records)

Ian Siegal arrived on the blues scene in '05, pitching his brand of electric blues-rock with strong elements of Howlin' Wolf's vocals.

His last release, *The Skinny*, sought the source of swampy, southern authenticity, teaming with that barrel full o' rattlers known as Cody Dickinson, Robert Kimbrough and Cody Burnside (a.k.a. the Youngest Sons). What worked so well then works as well here—Siegal clearly the proverbial kid in the candy store, surrounded by these equally talented influences. Returning players Cody Dickinson, Alvin Youngblood Hart and Garry Burnside join the added confection of Luther Dickinson and Lightnin' Malcolm.

Nothing here rips the roof off—on allstars terms—as you might expect from such a high-cranking crew, yet a relaxed and relatively subtle groove pervades this troll through the dark bayou backwaters. Siegal's efforts are all the more accomplished, if not freshened, for the partnership.

Highlights include *I Am The Train*, with its hard-driving delivery and near-opulent, complementary solos, and *Kingfish*, with its dark overtones despite its upbeat presentation. *The Fear* is another standout moment as Siegal's voice dips down into the growling zone, as if he just crawled from the swamp, matching the dark groove of *So Much Trouble*, kissed by Dickinson's sitar and some gnarly, near-buried slide. His surprising cover of Little Richard's *Green Power*—an unexpected twist of funkiness reinforced by the soul-serving voices of backup singers Stefanie Bolton, Sharisse and Shontelle Norman, who can't be utilized too much in the album's mix—underlines its strong soul element.

The acoustic intro to *Strong Power* sets up the snarl of the sort of lead guitar you might expect to hear on a Dickinson production, yet its incorporated on a subtle basis. Siegal's raspy vocals are the hero here while the backup instrumentation transports you to Mississippi via the bayous for a powerful, highly tasteful and slightly dangerous outcome.

— By Eric Thom



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## Dustin Bentall and the Smokes

Orion (Aporia Records)

Dustin Bentall's latest may just be the best six songs you hear all year! I know it's going to make my "best of" for 2012, it's just that damn good. A lot of comparisons come to mind but let's just say that this man nails his craft like few others. The title track, *Orion*, is a massive, head-bobbing-bass-throbbing monster of a song, although I'm still puzzling over what it's all about. *Emmy-Lou* is easier to figure, an almost-honky-tonk paean to a stripper, and *The Ballad of Billy Cowsill* is easier yet, a gorgeous tribute to the late singer and guitarist. *Souvenirs* and the propulsive *Oxford Street* round out the EP. Only six songs, but still, sometimes less really is more.

– By Richard Thornley

## Peter Bellamy

Peter Bellamy Sings the Barrack Room Ballads of Rudyard Kipling (Fellside Recordings)

Bellamy was one of the English folk revival's greatest voices who gained much of his early reputation performing with The Young Tradition. Their flamboyant costumes, witty stage show and powerful singing resulted in them achieving legendary status. In 1970, Bellamy began to set the poems of Kipling to music, eventually resulting in five albums of Kipling songs. Sadly, in 1991, Peter Bellamy committed suicide. This two-CD set is a compilation based on two previously released recordings.

Bellamy has an uncompromising approach to singing, which people seem to love or hate. It is undoubtedly the perfect vehicle for these songs, which reflect the experiences and daily struggles of ordinary soldiers. Rudyard Kipling wrote



the poems in the early 1890s and Bellamy matched them to mainly traditional tunes in the late 1970s. The final result is a masterful performance which serves as a perfect portrait of life in the lower ranks of the British Army.

– By Tim Readman

## Trent Severn

Trent Severn (Independent)

This self-titled debut album from this Ontario trio starts with harmonies that may recall Crosby, Stills and Nash. The material doesn't quite live up to that lofty comparison but the vocals in the song *Snowy Soul* are a pleasure. Dayna Manning, Emm Gryner and Laura C. Bates have very different qualities and yet the voices all manage to be complimentary. This project, named for the waterway that links Ontario cottage country, is refreshing in its Canadian-ness.

The delightfully complete liner notes provide insight to the inspiration behind the songs; a treat in a world where lyrics are often only available online. *Muskoka Bound* feels like a bluegrass tune, maybe not the genre of music Canadians associate with some of the most expensive cottage real estate in

the country, but it is fun. Other songs such as *Truscott* and *Mulroney Times* delve into more serious subject matter. There are a few moments where notes are reached for and missed, which might be an issue for country radio, but it is a nice project.

– By Ruth Blakely

## Tim O'Brien and Darrell Scott

We're Usually A Lot Better Than This (Full Light Records)

Magic happens every time Darrell Scott and Tim O'Brien get together. As Scott says, "We are fearless and we egg each other on to the edge of crash and burn".

This is a live album, with just the two of them making more beautiful noise than your average five-piece band. Maybe that's to be expected from two of the best songwriters, singers, multi-instrumentalists and listeners in the world of acoustic music.

Recorded about six years ago in North Carolina, it continues the path they travelled on *Real Time*, the disc they recorded five years before that. Playing banjo, guitar, mandolin, octave mandolin and hambone (don't ask), with impeccable vocal harmonies, they cover a wide

range of songs, from *Early Morning Rain* to Mick Ryan's *Lament*, as well as their own tunes, including Scott's *Long Time Gone*, which was a monster hit for the Dixie Chicks.

They're both busy with their own careers, including Scott's sideman gig with Robert Plant's Band of Joy. But they'd be doing us all a favour if they get back together and spread the magic.

– By Mike Sadava

## Staff Benda Bilili

Bouger Le Monde (Crammed Discs)

An incredible group from the streets of Kinshasa, Congo, with a phenomenal story: a group of poor, disabled musicians (most were crippled by polio at a young age) that travel through use of homemade wheelchair/bicycles. Leaders Ricky Likabu and Coco Ngambali formed the group more than 30 years ago on the hard-scrabble streets of Kinshasa, one of Africa's largest and toughest cities. Struggling for years to make ends meet, they added additional musicians including a young street kid, Roger Landu, who plays a homemade one-stringed instrument he calls a satonge, which produces amazing sounds and



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## Reviews

is featured as the main solo instrument with the band.

Discovered in 2004 by a couple of French filmmakers, they later meet Belgium producer Vincent Kenis (*Congotronics*, *Konono No. 1*) who recorded their debut album in 2008. They came to Europe in 2009 to much attention and appearances at major festivals and concerts.

A true Cinderella story, this second album shows just how they have matured and improved their back-the-roots Congolese rumba sound, with strong vocal and acoustic instrumental prowess. The success of their recent debut North American tour and this excellent new recording further confirms that this is an extraordinary group. Highly recommended.

– By Jonathan Kertzer

### James Findlay

Another Day Another Story (Fellside Recordings)

This is Findlay's second CD and he takes a simple approach with his strong voice front and centre, usually accompanied by his dexterous guitar work. He adds some fiddle and there are occasional accordion tracks and backing vocals. The songs mainly come from his birthplace, England's West

Country. There are some well known traditionals such as *The Cuckoo* and *Geordie* and some less familiar ones. *Ox Plough Song* is one of a number of unaccompanied performances which also features harmony vocals by Beth Orrell. *Down in Your Mines*, another solo song, showcases the power of Findlay's singing. A song that is familiar is *Rosebuds in June*, due to its link with Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which is also the title of a film about the life of Hardy in which Findlay recently played the part of Dick Dewy. Talented lad, that James Findlay!

– By Tim Readman

### Lucy Kaplansky

Reunion (Red House Records)

While studying to be a psychologist, Kaplansky started out in a duo with Shawn Colvin in the '80s. Lucy has also collaborated in *Cry Cry Cry* with Dar Williams and Richard Shindell and in *Red Horse* with John Gorka and Eliza Gilkyson.

She's shown up a lot on other people's albums and she continues to put out solo recordings. It just seems, though, she never receives the due or attention she





deserves for her own work that just keeps coming one good album after another.

*Reunion* is Lucy's seventh solo album, featuring seven songs written by her and her husband, Richard Litvin, and four sterling covers—one a lovely version of Eliza Gilkyson's *The Beauty Way* and then a terrific growly bluesy version of Woody Guthrie's *This Morning I Am Born Again* featuring Buddy Miller with some great backup vocals.

Thematically it holds together as songs of family and reuniting, and family is important as she sings in a terrific little song called *Scavenger*: "But you'll walk with the ones you love / In the valleys of your life / You'll always stand with the ones you keep / In the valley of your life".

Lucy Kaplansky just chugs along putting out good records every couple of years. Take a chance and explore the *Reunion*.

— By les siemieniuk

## Maeve Mackinnon

Once Upon An Olive Branch (Independent)

This is the second solo album from Glasgow's Maeve Mackinnon and once again her fine voice, singing in English and Scots Gaelic, is the main attraction. It is a fine instrument, capable of much variety in both tone and emotion, whether on



the quiet and reflective A' Mhic Dhughail 'Ic Ruairidh or the lilting, uptempo O Phail o ho ghraidh. The instrumental backing is imaginative and varied in style with equal measures of urban grooves, traditional Scots playing, jazzy swing and rhythmic changes. The title track was written by Mackinnon to draw attention to the struggles and suffering endured by the people of Palestine and is an indication of her potential as a lyricist: "Once upon an olive branch in 1999/115 homes reduced to just nine/If home is where the heart is, the heart must be blind/As land disappears in these hard troubled times". Another triumph for Ms. MM!

— By Tim Readman

## Zoe Thiessen

The Lives of Saints and Sinners (Independent)

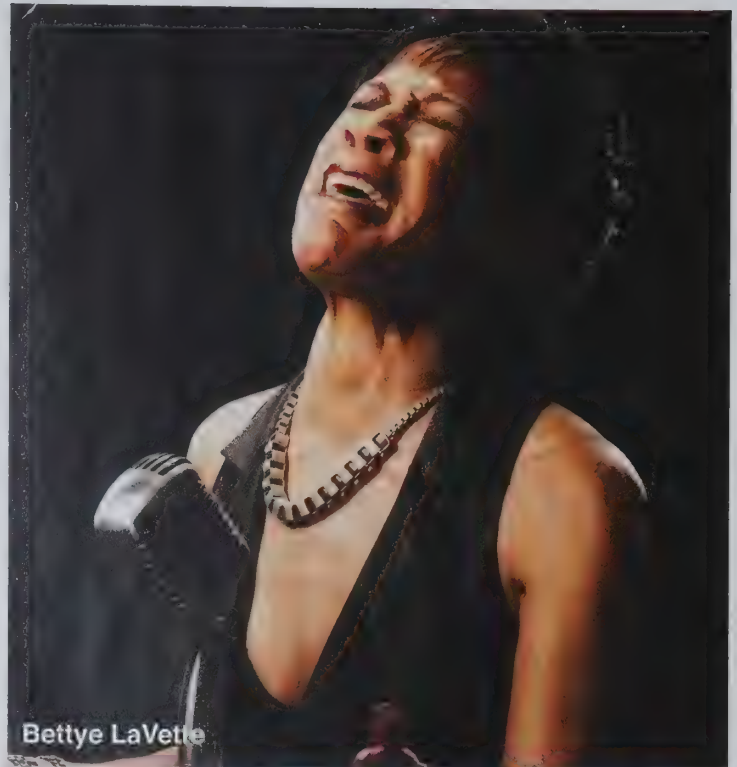
Vancouver singer/songwriter Zoe Thiessen prophetically sings: "...my race is run, the fight is won, I'm on my way". With this sparkling debut disc, she's definitely going places.

Thiessen invested in the West Coast musical genius of Steve Dawson to produce the album and play a gazillion instruments, but that's just the icing on the cake. It's all about the songs and Thiessen's natural voice, which is a bit reminiscent of Kathleen Edwards.

Thiessen articulately explores the emotions, from envy to temptation. And her job as a nurse has given her insights that most of us aren't witness to.

And her thoughts are expressed with melodies that have some interesting twists and turns. My favourite is *A Room with A View* with its samba-type groove, although I imagine it would be a bit chilly to float beside the Isle of Wight.

— By Mike Sadava



## Bettye LaVette

Thankful N' Thoughtful (Anti-)

Coming on the heels of 2010's *Interpretations: The British Rock Songbook*, Bettye LaVette has turned her attention to artists from this side of the pond. This release cements her reputation as an inspired interpreter of works by other artists and songwriters. Her expressive vocals and soaring range are employed to the maximum, wringing every ounce of emotion out of her chosen material.

*Thankful N' Thoughtful* cuts a wide swath, featuring covers of songs by Sly Stone, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Tom Waits, and The Black Keys. LaVette does a funky take on Dylan's *Everything Is Broken*, and a lush and mournful rendition of Ewan MacColl's *Dirty Old Town*; she could be singing about Detroit rather than the inspiration, Salford, Lancashire. The retooled reprise version that closes the album is, er, less than successful.

Presumably there are more covers to come from Ms. LaVette and we look forward to them with anticipation.

— By Doug Swanson

## Caetano Veloso and David Byrne

Live at Carnegie Hall (Nonesuch)

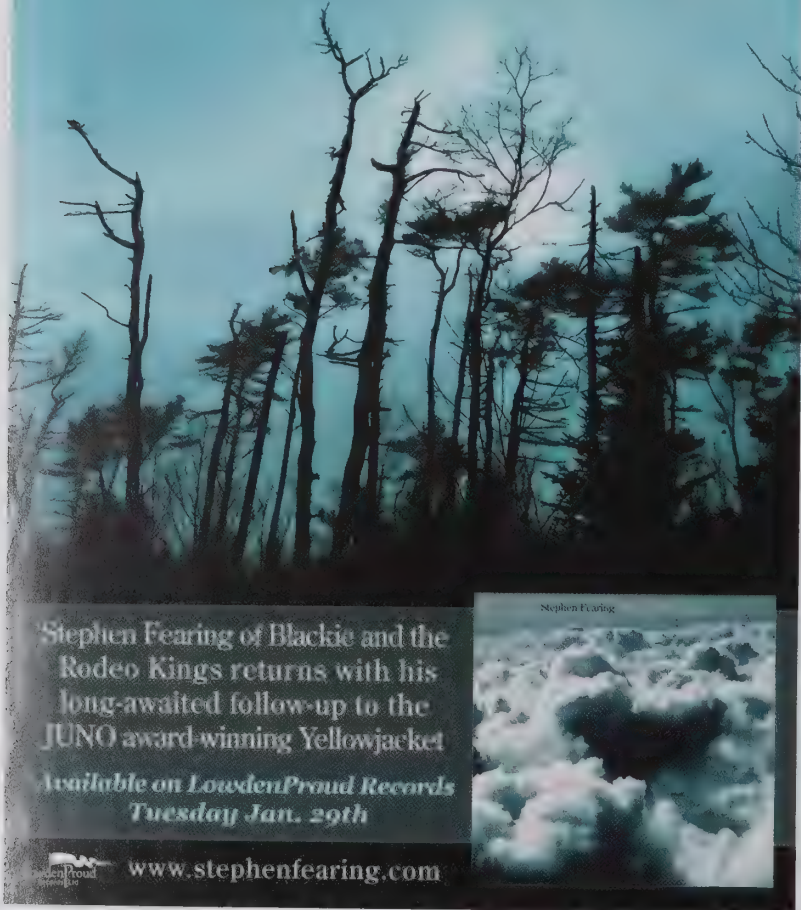
In 2004 Carnegie Hall invited Caetano Veloso to curate its Perspectives series. The parameters of the series allow the curator not only to provide artists an opportunity for a gilded New York appearance but to take the stage alongside those artists. The one American musician that Veloso selected was David Byrne.

Byrne and Veloso had been acquainted for some time. They first met at a Brazilian film festival where each was presenting a feature-length film. But ultimately each is a musician, and while Veloso had been a fan since seeing *Stop Making Sense* in a movie theatre, Byrne had since "fallen down the rabbit hole of Brazilian music". As songwriters, each had tremendous admiration of the other's work.

David Byrne has been Pop Music's Ambassador to Brazilian Music, and the Carnegie Hall concert was a musical summit meeting. Before an adoring crowd (every song is



# Stephen Fearing Between Hurricanes



## Reviews

recognized and applauded within the first few bars), the event was part love-in, part retrospective, part diplomatic event. Byrne is associated with a strong visual element and high production values but here he meets Veloso on common ground: stripped down playing on an acoustic guitar, with only cello and light percussion for accompaniment.

The setting allows the writing to stand on its own merits, to view the songs through a longer lens. The acoustics and the reputation of The Hall put the music in a whole 'nuther context: here's an opportunity to appreciate Brazilian music through the ears of an American pop icon, and here's an opportunity to put David Byrne's songwriting shoulder to shoulder with Veloso's acknowledged gems of the craft.

The result is charming. The understatement of the evening, and the glowing mutual respect of the artists creates an evening of wonderful music, shared.

— By Lark Clark

are Lillias Kinsman-Blake (flute), Shona Mooney (fiddle), Rachel Newton (electroharp, clarsach, vocals), Olivia Ross (fiddle, viola, vocals), Laura-Beth Salter (mandolin, vocals) and Amy Thatcher (accordion, harmonium). They combine Scottish, English and Irish folk with bluegrass and more contemporary influences on this collection of mostly original songs and tunes. The trad *Down in the Broom* opens the album and features viola and fiddle and fine vocal harmonies. The instrumental *Starlings* showcases flute, mandolin and accordion accompanied by the funky beat of the electroharp. *Our Bottle* starts with a deliberately muted and muffled gin-soaked sound before the clean vocal sound breaks through to tell the rest of the story of a breakup. This is an imaginative and vivacious album. Get it while it's fresh!

— By Tim Readman

### Kyp Harness

The Wrong Way

Can a Poor Man Get a Fair Trial?

(Independent)

From Toronto, singer/songwriter Kyp Harness delivers an interesting turn. A simultaneous release of two albums in one package, and

### The Shee

Murmurations (Independent)

This is the third release from one of the most exciting bands on the U.K. folk scene in recent years. They still

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although packaged together, they are quite different in their themes and presentation.

*The Wrong Way* is a collection of pop songs while *Can A Poor Man Get A Fair Trial?* is a gathering of dark acoustic story ballads about princes and queens, a number of which include or end in death. Unfortunately, as both albums play on, the songs—13 similar songs on one album and 12 similar songs on the other—after a while, start to run into one another and begin to sound the same. Perhaps some attempt at editing could have helped prevent this and made the remaining songs stronger. An interesting experiment with some good songs that is not entirely successful.

— By les siemieniuk

## LP

Into the Wild Warner

The rationale for introducing American singer/songwriter LP to a wider audience with a live EP is obvious a minute or two in—it sounds like the kind of performance that turns listeners into true believers. The choice of ukulele as her main axe bodes something twee or cute but you need not



worry. Backed by an ace band that knows how and when to hit, LP—who looks like what would happen if Phil Lynott and Bob Dylan had a baby—conveys an emotional intensity with a piercing, untrammelled voice over the course of five impressive songs equipped with big, singalong-able choruses in performances that beggar easy comparison. Even the least of them, the quasi-exotic *Tokyo Sunrise*, serves as showcase for her startling vocal range and control. LP might just be started getting her name out there but it sounds like she's ready for any folk fest mainstage you'd care to stick her on. Let the ovations begin.

— By Scott Lingley

## Paul Kelly

Spring and Fall (Gawd Aggie Recordings)

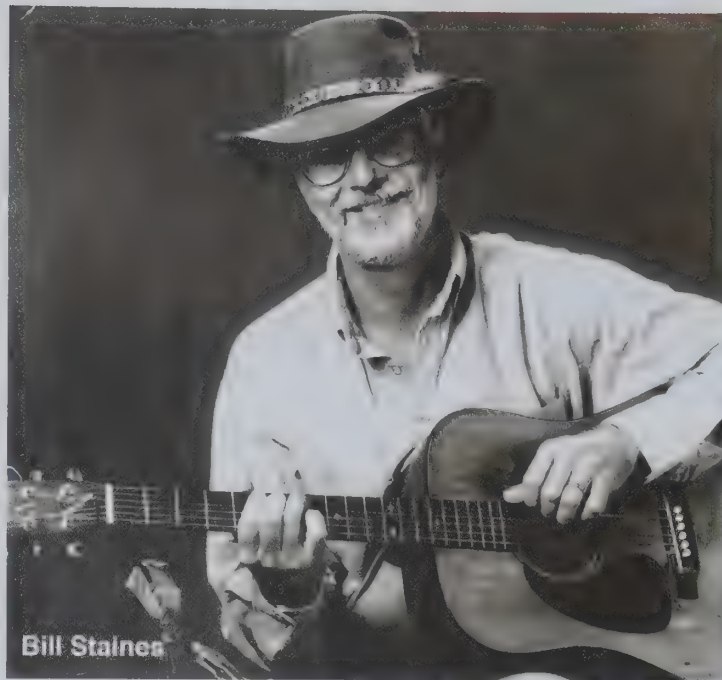
Paul Kelly has had a great career. His seventeenth album came out in 2007. So this one has been five years in the making. Has it been worth the wait?

Well, it's interesting. It's a concept album. It follows a relationship from start to finish. From the all-consuming first flush of *New Found Year* through the turning where it becomes as *Cold As Canada* and then to the conclusion of *None Of Your Business Now* and then finally acceptance in *Little Aches And Pains*.

So yes, it is worth the wait. It works really well. While the 11 songs act as chapters of the bigger story, they also stand on their own.

The recording was done straight off the floor in a rural hall as an acoustic trio and is simply and wonderfully done. Nothing sounds better than voice, two guitars and a bass. It's a nice experiment done by an old pro and makes for lovely listening.

— By les siemieniuk



## Bill Staines

Beneath Some Lucky Star (Red House

Records)

Bill Staines never achieved the profile in the world of folk-singers of many of his contemporaries from the 1960s such as Phil Ochs and Tom Paxton, especially on this side of the border. But the New Hampshire troubadour has never stopped touring and recording, with his songs being recorded by the likes of Nanci Griffith, Tommy Makem and Liam Clancy, and Jerry Jeff Walker.

His 26th album could open up some new ears to his fine music. Blessed with a resonant baritone, melodic sense and good chops on both guitar and piano, Staines shows that the artistic flame is still burning after 45 years as a musician.

This is a gentle album chock full of images of the sea and the quest to find a peaceful place, and my favourite, the luck of picking up an old guitar "... that seemed to know the music of my soul". He also does fine renditions of traditional classics such as *Lord Franklin* and even a chestnut written by Ian and Sylvia, *The French Girl*.

— By Mike Sadava

## Jason Collett

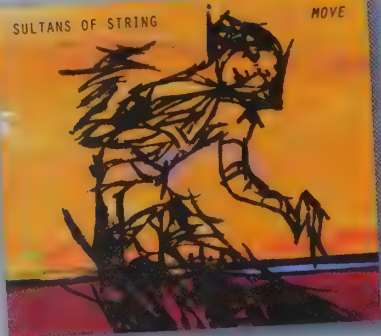
Reckon (Arts & Crafts Records)

Apart from his work with Broken Social Scene, Jason Collett is a memorable force as a singer/songwriter. He has that way with vocals, melodies and lyrics reminiscent of someone like Danny Michel, who can make a catchy song seemingly out of thin air. With his humorous *I Wanna Rob a Bank* getting airplay on CBC and the release of this fifth solo disc, more people than ever are getting to hear the Bramalea-born, Toronto-based musician. The 15 tracks on this release (and 11 more on an "essential cuts" download) run the gamut of bouncy (*King James Rag*) funky/groovy (*You're Not The One And Only Lonely One*), wistful (*Pacific Blue*), artsy (*Jasper Johns' Flag*), sincere (*Ask No Questions*) and most things in between. It really is a something-for-everyone disc in a time when most artists are trying desperately to squeeze into a tiny niche. Hopefully, it will expand his reputation even more and garner even wider recognition for this talented artist.

— By Barry Hammond



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### Luka Bloom

This New Morning (Compass Records)

Twenty-odd years since his debut recording, Luka Bloom is still out there doing it. This collection includes a wide variety of themes and styles. Things get going with *How Am I To Be?*, a reflective and melancholy examination of personal angst. *A Seed Was Sown* is a jazz-in-flected song of hope for healing in his native Ireland, written after the Queen visited the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin. *Your Little Wings* is a plea to the young women binge drinking in his hometown to be careful. *The Ride* is a tribute song to the pursuit of bicycling, which extols its many virtues.

The accompaniment is simple and uncluttered whether it be from accordion, guitar, drum or the string orchestra he uses on a few tracks. Somehow, though, this music doesn't reach me. I wonder if I am missing something, but eventually I decide it's just not my cup of tea.

— By Tim Readman

### Karla Mundy

Way Back (Independent)

Karla Mundy first came to the world's attention on David Francey's debut CD, where she sang fine backing vocals. Along with her sister Keona, Neil Hammond, Mad Pudding's Andy Hillhouse and The Outside Track's Norah Rendell, she formed Cleia, whose brief career lit up Canadian folk with great harmony singing and brilliant arrangements. She moved

on to found the wonderful all-woman a capella group The No Shit Shirleys, as well as performing old-time music with Plough. Now she has released her first solo CD and that's a very good thing.

It is a collection of old and old-sounding songs, including traditionals like *The Blackest Crow* and *Wayfarin' Stranger*, covers of the likes of Mississippi John Hurt and Hazel Dickens, and more recent fare by Kieran Kane and Bob Dylan. The accompaniment on guitar, fiddle, banjo and bass features tasteful playing from Steve Charles, Tim Tweedale, Patrick Metzger, Kori Myanishi and Chris Suen. There are some lovely vocal harmonies courtesy of Keona Hammond, Dawn Pemberton and Melanie Spence. However, it is Ms. Mundy who steals the show. She has soul with a capital S and it simply pours out of this record. On first listen the hairs on the back of my neck were stood up more often than they were lying down. A winner from a truly marvellous singer!

— By Tim Readman

### Owls By Nature

Everything Is Hunted (Independent)

*Everything Is Hunted*, which from what I can gather is the second album (*Blackwater*) from this gifted quintet from Edmonton, was released to rollicking claim at the Avenue Theatre in September.

It is an infectious, addictive 11-song disc of original songs that is thoroughly pleasing. One of their webpage links describes their music as "whiskey-fuelled folk rock anthems for people who like to party" and there is no denying that.

There is a raw, strep-throat quality to Ian McIntosh's engaging lead vocals that gives the songs a deliciously jagged edge. Superb musicianship throughout from Sean Hamilton (bass, vocals), Cory Donnahee (banjo, organ, vocals), Doc deGroot (lead guitar, mandolin, lap steel, melodica, vocals), and Shea Connor (drums, percussion, vocals).

*Heartbreaking Ways* has a punkabilly, throbbing beat, *Wandering Woman* offers a nifty tempo change into a lively



Karla Mundy





two-step, *Alcoholics* is a good drunken singalong song with a swaying beat, jolly vocals and a multi-voiced chorus that's easy to remember when you're hammered—and don't forget the big finish.

Highly recommended.

— By Doug Swanson

## The 24th Street Wailers

Unshakeable (Independent)

This spunky band of upstarts have been making some noise for the blues since winning the Toronto Blues Society's talent search two years prior. At the same time, they ably demonstrate the difference between wanting to play the blues and actually playing them. You can't blame that on their age. You could possibly blame it on their inconsistent musicianship. But they deserve much support for having wrangled such profile in such short order. The addition of time to the equation can only make them better at what they're trying to do. Points for diving in with all-original material and keeping their distance from computer-based productions.

Some key ingredients are in their favour—Jonathon Wong's dirty '50s saxophone tone and

some shrewd moves by young guitarist Emily Burgess. Two songs stand out as being exceptional. The killer instrumental in *Love Triangle* proves that the band can milk the hell out of a good groove. Then again, the fact that it features the extreme talents of one Carter Chaplin (and Marc Doucet) reveal much of the muscle and skill behind this rendition. Another is *Jack, Jim, Jonny and Me* wherein Wong's sax propels a strong '50s swing that the band clearly gets into, audibly. However, the vocals presented by Lindsay Beaver—throughout—are brutal at best and still too much in-your-face when she's at her best. There's no way around this Achilles Heel, even on the otherwise strong opening track *Home Cookin'*.

The song *Trouble* features her howl but it eventually erodes into bleating, while some bad notes on a good track, *I Will*, force the conclusion that they need a good producer who will beat the crap out of bad performance. Once they get that solved, they've got a promising future for their redefinition of a somewhat tired genre. Time, again, is on their side.

— By Eric Thom

## Royal Wood

*We Were Born to Glory* (Independent)

Last year when Belgian filmmakers the Dardenne Brothers released *Le gamin au vélo*, some reviewers (such as *Salon's* Andrew O'Hehir) sardonically remarked, "Ho hum—another brilliant film by the Dardenne Brothers." I'm starting to feel the same way about Canada's unstemmable tide of accomplished pop prodigies, of which Royal Wood is inarguably a part. It's all there: the impeccable vocal hooks, the smart arrangements, the studied lyrical wit, repeated just enough to become irrevocably embedded in your ear. Such manicured genius, which invites comparisons with Rufus Wainwright or Hawksley Workman (or, indeed, a score of other mildly eccentric, dashing young troubadours), is becoming almost wearying in

its seemingly effortless appeal.

Its sole shortcoming might be that the disc's highly burnished pop gems lack much in the way of surprise or, for that matter, emotional impact. *We Were Born To Glory* sounds perfect right now but it's hard to imagine long-term rotation.

— By Scott Lingley

## Duncan Chisholm

Affric (Copperfish Records)

Affric is the final part of a trilogy of recordings which began with *Farrar* in 2008 and continued with *Canaich* in 2010. All are musical celebrations of the Strathglass, an area of notable natural beauty in the Highlands of Scotland. Chisholm is a wonderful fiddler with a lyrical style. Accompanying him here is a stellar cast, including Phil Cunningham (piano, accordion, whistle), Jarlath Henderson (uilleann pipes) and Ali Hutton (bodhran, guitar, whistle). The music is wonderfully evocative and brings to mind the majestic scenery of Scotland's wilderness.

There are traditional tunes such as *An Ribhinn Donn* as well as original pieces by Chisholm, Johnny Cunningham, Liz Carroll and Phil Cunningham and others. The stand-out track for me is *The Flooded Meadow* with its gently propulsive rhythms and wonderfully elastic uilleann piping. This will be a beautiful addition to the collection of all lovers of instrumental fiddle music.

— By Tim Readman





# Reviews

## Jim Lauderdale

Carolina Moonrise (Sky Crunch Records/Compass)

The prolific Jim Lauderdale has released 20-odd albums in his career, the latest being *Carolina Moonrise*, his second of the year after *Buddy & Jim*, his lauded collaboration with Buddy Miller, one of the hottest commodities in roots music these days.

This is Lauderdale's fourth go-around with Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter and it is a testament to the enduring and productive partnership these two artists have forged. There are aching vocals, clever lyrics and poignant messages.

Lauderdale's curriculum vitae is impressive and varied, having worked with diverse talents that include Ralph Stanley, Dwight Yoakum, George Strait, the Dixie Chicks and Hot

Tuna. His vocal stylings are as comfortable as old blue jeans as he sings the hard-luck ballads, lost-love laments and courting songs that are hallmarks of bluegrass.

Noteworthy tracks include *Iodine*, about a caustic girlfriend, and *Fiddler's Heaven*, a paean to fiddling greats.

— By Doug Swanson

## Tom House

Winding Down The Road (Mud Records)

Like Tom Waits, Bob Dylan, William S. Burroughs or Townes Van Zandt, Tom House has that quality of slightly rural, eccentric originality, what writer Greil Marcus called "old weird America", a term coined by Marcus to describe the often eerie country, blues and folk music featured on Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American*

*Folk Music*. Marcus also wrote an article about Tom House in the 1998 issue of *Esquire* magazine called *Devil's Music*. Born in 1949, House has been a widely published poet and songwriter and is sometimes described as a bar-room poet and singer. Canadian-born singer/songwriter and musician Brock Zeman produces his latest disc and plays a variety of instruments to add further country/roots/acoustic resonances to the musical background.

He also adds Kelly Sloan's harmonies, which rub uneasily against House's to create a weird beauty of their own. Like a field recording, the disc has a primitive charm that wins the listener over with its sincerity and honest quality. A really elegant oddity that fans of modern alt-country in the vein

of Gillian Welch, Jim White or The Handsome Family will need to own immediately.

— By Barry Hammond

## Melissa Payne

Melissa Payne (Seventh Fire Records)

Having had fiddle lessons from the Leahy family and served as a tour hand for Natalie McMaster, this Ennismore, ON, fiddler/guitarist/songwriter has had mentoring from some internationally acclaimed artists. The professionalism shows on this debut CD with nine firmly crafted songs. She also has a voice that seems well-suited to recording folk/pop/rock/traditional songs in that it has an intimate, slightly breathy, catch in it to pull the listener in, before massaging the ears with its warmer emotional tones.

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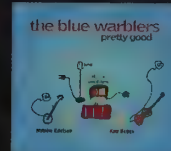
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She can play, too, taking some pretty nice solos on the tracks *This Feeling* and *In Our Dreams*. Although the demo didn't have musician credits on it, there's some rock-solid playing on this disc, especially by the drummer, and it's produced by another professional in James McKenty (Blue Rodeo and The Spades). It's a stable career-launcher of a disc that should push the artist as far as she wants to go.

— By Barry Hammond

## Lizzy Hoyt

A Christmas Song (Independent)

Lizzy Hoyt has a really fine, clear voice and is an exceptional instrumentalist on both fiddle and guitar. She's won several awards for her playing, singing and songwriting — check her *Home* (2010), and *My Red Shoes* (2007). This Christmas disc was actually released last year but missed our reviews. Produced by and with some equally fine playing by Jeremiah McDade (with Solon McDade on bass and Sara Pagé on harp) it's a Christmas record in the Celtic mode. That automatically means there are some similarities to the classic 1991 Christmas disc *The Bells*



*Of Dublin* by The Chieftains. Indeed, it contains *Ding Dong Merrily On High*, which they also covered, but she takes it at a jaunty clip sans choir. Having said that, there haven't been many discs since that could stand up to such a comparison. Play one against the other and this holds its own surprisingly well. There can't be a more flattering test than that. McDade's flute playing against her fiddle has a really haunting tone. If you're in the mood for a Celtic Christmas disc, this is a really good one. Top marks to Lizzy Hoyt and Jeremiah McDade.

— By Barry Hammond

## Various Artists

No Pasaran! (They Shall Not Pass) - Scots in the Spanish Civil War (Greentree Recordings)

This is a collection of songs concerning the volunteer Scots who fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the elected Republican government against General Franco and the fascists. Among the 35,000 international volunteers who joined Spain's anti-Fascist forces between 1936 and 1939, more came from Scotland, proportionately, than any other country. These songs celebrate the solidarity between Scotland and Spain, and recall a time when a generation stood up to be counted because democracy and freedom were threatened.

It includes a rousing banjo rendition of *Jarama Valley/ Bandiera Rosa* by The Laggan, *Jamie Foyers* sturdily performed by Dick Gaughan, a stirring reading of *The Peatbog Soldiers* by The McCalmans and Robin Laing's *Picasso Paints Guernica*, which was written especially for this CD. A strong and moving album with powerful messages, memories and meaning.

— By Tim Readman



## Various Artists

Rough Guide To The Music of Ethiopia (World Music Network)

Distribution routes in the music industry being what they are, it's a good bet you haven't heard any of these songs yet, and they're worth checking out. A whole world of Ethiopian musicians are deftly handling this unique form, making the ancient music modern. Who knew?

What gives Ethiopian music its pungent flavour? It's not enough to explain that it's pentatonic. So are Celtic and Chinese music but you'd never mistake them for Ethiopian music. For one thing, ancient instruments like the *krar* and the *begen* are up front in a number of these bands, infusing the sound with an otherworldly quality.

It's encouraging to learn that the distinctive strains of this music are strong in cities like London and New York, as well as thriving back home in Addis Ababa. Additional vintage recordings from the 25-volume series *Ethiopiquest* provide historical perspective.

— By Lark Clark

## Various Artists

Rough Guide to Undiscovered World (World Music Network)

Battle of the Bands goes global.

An ongoing feature of the Rough Guides is an online Miss World contest—send in a track from your band and expose yourself! Adorn your entry with photos and await the world's reaction.

World Music Network staff and in-the-know public vote to determine the best entries, which are then included in *Undiscovered World*, a compilation release on the Rough Guide label. Winners also get editorial space in the British world music mag *Songlines*.

Despite the contention that most of its contents are previously unreleased, many of the tracks appear to be lifted from existing albums, some of them on WMN's own *Introducing* series, as part of its Riverboat imprint.

The 15 contest winners vying for your love—or at least interest—have passed the elusive criterion, “Are you really world music?”

— By Lark Clark



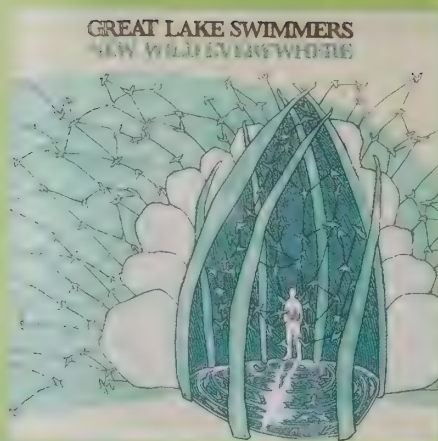
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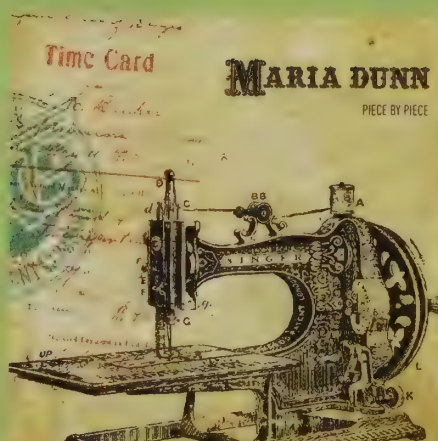
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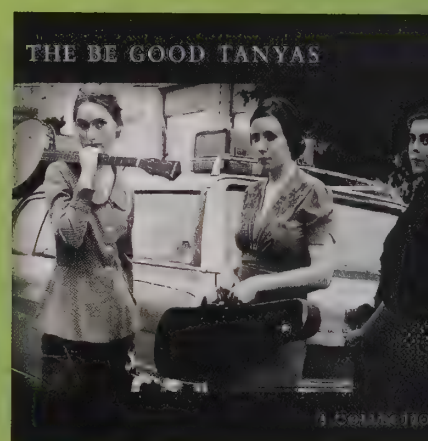
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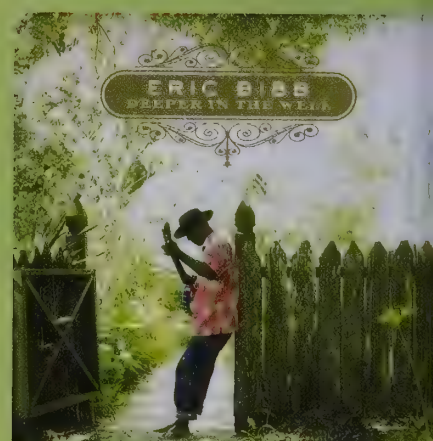
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## Au-delà du Blues

Nourris au départ par une scène ottavienne blues en effervescence, les **MonkeyJunk**, récipiendaires de plusieurs prix, sont devenus l'un des meilleurs groupes en Amérique du Nord. Roger Levesque les a rencontrés dans une atmosphère feutrée.

Il semble que le blues arrive toujours à inspirer les musiciens et les mélomanes de chaque nouvelle génération. Le trio originaire d'Ottawa **MonkeyJunk** rassemble des compagnons de musique d'horizons et d'âges très différents, ce qui explique peut-être leur évolution si rapide.

On se rend vite compte en se tenant avec eux que leurs plaisanteries, leur respect et leur amour de la musique transcendent les différences d'âge, comme dans n'importe quel groupe d'amis ayant déjà passé quatre années de péripéties ensemble.

C'est le membre le plus jeune Steve Marriner (maintenant âgé de 27 ans) – voix, guitare, harmonica et clavier – et le membre le plus vieux, le guitariste soliste Tony D. (50 ans), qui ont eu l'idée de la formation «deux-guitares-pas-de-basse», suivant l'exemple de Hound Dog Taylor et de Little Walter, entre autres.

L'intégration du batteur Matt Sobb (39 ans) au trio se fit de façon fluide, lui qui avait déjà travaillé avec chacun d'eux auparavant. Il aura suffi d'un petit coup de téléphone l'informant qu'on l'attendait à la première pratique, un dimanche soir, au début de l'année 2008.

«Il y a probablement certaines personnes qui nous connaissaient tous les trois qui pensaient que ça ne marcherait jamais», commente Matt. «Il faut dire que notre dynamique est vraiment unique parce que nous appartenons à trois générations différentes et nous apportons au groupe des forces et des propositions très diversifiées.»

Steve se souvient avoir senti dès le début qu'ils tenaient quelque chose de spécial. «Dès le premier concert au pub Irene's, nous savions qu'il se passait quelque chose d'intéressant. En un mois, le bar était devenu plein à craquer et il y avait des gens qui



revenaient nous voir toutes les semaines.»

Vu ses débuts non officiels, personne n'aurait imaginé que **MonkeyJunk** serait en nomination pour le Prix Maple Blues du Meilleur artiste émergent à l'automne suivant, avant même qu'ils n'aient eu la chance de sortir un album, ni que leur passage au International Blues Challenge à Memphis en février 2009 leur vaudrait une troisième place devant une centaine de concurrents, ce qui n'est définitivement pas un mauvais début. Ensuite, les choses se sont mises à «débouler», comme le dit Steve.

Ils réussissent à sortir leur premier album *Tiger In Your Tank* au printemps, puis à passer tout le reste de l'année en tournée pour ensuite remporter cinq prix sur les six nominations obtenues au Maple Blues 2010 dont le Prix Artiste de l'année. De retour à Memphis, leur album leur vaut le Prix du Meilleur artiste émergent au Blues Music Award 2010. C'est la deuxième fois seulement qu'un groupe canadien gagne quoique ce soit lors de cette cérémonie (le premier gagnant étant Jeff Healey).

Les trois musiciens se réjouissent du soutien de la scène blues d'Ottawa, qui a également encouragé des noms comme Sue Foley and J.W. Jones, mais il faut reconnaître que la chimie a aussi quelque chose à voir avec leur succès. «C'est comme si le groupe s'était fait botter le cul par un sabot

de cheval, blague Matt. Nous étions tous déjà des musiciens expérimentés, mais notre expérience collective nous a propulsés. Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais nous trois ensemble, ça marche vraiment bien.»

Le lancement de leur second album *To Behold*, produit par Stony Plain Records, vers la fin de l'année 2011, marque une autre étape dans l'évolution de leur son et leur vaut le Prix Juno du Meilleur album de blues au printemps 2012.

*Tiger In Your Tank* a été terminé relativement rapidement en studio pour permettre au groupe d'avoir en main une carte de visite; le groupe est donc resté très près de ses racines sur cet album et n'a pas fait de grand changement, contrairement à *To Behold* qui a nécessité beaucoup plus de préparation, et qui contient des chansons éprouvées en tournée.

«J'aime vraiment mieux le son sur cet album, commente Steve, parce qu'il a été enregistré dans le studio de notre producteur Ken Friesen, avec beaucoup plus d'équipement analogique. Nous avons passé environ une semaine dans le sous-sol à arranger les compositions, et l'enregistrement des neuf pistes s'est fait en deux jours, en ajoutant les paroles à la fin. Nous avons pris beaucoup plus de risques et nous avons mis beaucoup plus de nous-mêmes dans cet album. Arrivés près de la fin, Ken



**«On ressent parfois de la pression venant des puristes du blues qui nous enjoignent de porter le flambeau du blues. J'ai eu une sorte d'éveil qui m'a fait réaliser que c'est correct d'aimer d'autres styles de musique.»**

et moi avons eu l'idée de jouer la chanson de Hank Williams.»

La chanson de Williams *You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)* est la seule reprise de l'album. On lui a donné de nouveaux arrangements en y ajoutant les plaintes d'un harmonica et des accords de guitares trépidants, ce qui a emmené la chanson ailleurs, bien loin de ses origines country. Voilà un tout petit exemple des choix musicaux éclectiques qui ont mené à la création de l'album, oscillant entre les grooves soul, les ballades plus mélancoliques (comme la création plus spontanée *Let Her Down*) et les chansons agrémentées de morceaux de piano Wurlitzer et d'orgue Hammond joués par Steve.

Tony D. nous offre la première pièce de l'album, *Mother's Crying* (inspiré de Robert Johnson), qui illustre le sentiment d'être un perdant, un sentiment qu'ils espèrent continuer d'explorer.

«Nos pièces sonneront toujours blues parce que c'est notre style de jeu, mais il y a d'autres influences qui commencent à se montrer le bout du nez. On sent les influences plus soul et traditionnelles qui sortent du chemin tracé par le blues, et le rock'n'roll aussi un peu. J'ai grandi en écoutant ce genre de musique alors c'est difficile de passer à côté. Je pense que le blues est en train de changer, comme dans les années 60 où il est passé par une période de transformation; et nous aussi, nous nous dirigeons vers quelque chose de nouveau. Je pense que nous essayons d'atteindre un son plus brut.»

«Pour Tony D. (pour Diteodoro) le blues représente ce sentiment de souffrance qui l'attirait quand il allait voir des spectacles pendant son adolescence. «Je ne sais pas si j'ai choisi le blues ou si c'est le blues qui m'a choisi. Je ne sais pas comment l'expliquer», dit celui qui jouit d'une grande expérience, ayant joué avec de nombreux groupes avant MonkeyJunk dans la région d'Ottawa, et dont le surnom, trouvé par Steve, est maintenant «le parrain

de la scène ottavienne». Matt a joué dans un de ses groupes pendant sept ans.

Matt a commencé un peu tard; il avait 18 ans quand il a commencé à jouer de la batterie pour le plaisir. Il fut inspiré par son plus jeune frère, qui jouait dans un groupe, et eut bientôt sa place comme batteur au sein du groupe. Steve s'est mis à tripper sur Chuck Berry et sur le Chicago blues après avoir vu le film *The Blues Brothers*. Il a commencé à jouer de l'harmonica à 11 ans et a rencontré Tony et Matt à 13 ans.

Les voir en spectacle, c'est voir à quel point ils aiment travailler ensemble, un plaisir qui se communique aisément aux spectateurs. De par leurs interactions, les deux guitaristes créent des moments savoureux, utilisant divers d'instruments, et s'amuse à se féliciter mutuellement. Selon l'expression de Matt, «Steve pense comme un bassiste».

Steve affirme qu'ils ont tant donné au blues qu'ils ont maintenant le droit de jouer des airs au-delà du blues. «On ressent parfois de la pression venant des puristes du blues qui nous enjoignent de porter le flambeau du blues. J'ai eu une sorte d'éveil qui m'a fait réaliser que c'est correct d'aimer d'autres styles de musique. Ces attentes planent encore au-dessus de nos têtes quand on joue quelque chose qui sort du langage blues, mais j'ai confiance en le fait que nos créations nous ressembleront.»

## À qui la rue? Au trad!

**Ils s'appellent Le Trad Commando. Ce sont des musiciens québécois qui organisent des spectacles de musique traditionnelle impromptus dans les rues de Montréal et d'ailleurs. Yves Bernard a pris des nouvelles des troupes.**

Ils s'invitent dans les lieux publics, prennent d'assaut des stations de métro, débarquent à l'université, occupent un marché public, investissent des festivals et se font même entendre à la radio officielle. Tout ça de façon très joyeuse avec la musique traditionnelle québécoise comme arme de tradition massive. Puis,



Photo: Par Alain Chagnon

ils filment leurs actions et les diffusent sur YouTube. Et leur impact est bien réel. Rencontre avec Jean Desrochers et Véronique Plasse, deux des organisateurs de ce projet très spécial.

«Ça a germé dans nos têtes quand on était à Montréal», se rappelle Jean. «On se promenait en transport en commun et on se disait que ça serait le fun si quelqu'un se mettait à jouer de la musique traditionnelle juste là comme un cheveu sur la soupe. On était aussi des fans d'Improv Everywhere, un groupe à New York qui fait des mobilisations éclair (flasmobs) sur à peu près n'importe quoi. Ils créent des trucs absurdes et font des vidéos avec ça. On a adapté l'idée à la musique traditionnelle».

Jean et Véronique venaient de trouver une façon rassembleuse de montrer la fierté des racines. Un soir, ils lancent par courriel des invitations à une mission. Ils se disent: «Si on est dix, on le fait». Le 27 novembre 2009, le commando trad est né. Presque une vingtaine de musiciens descendent au métro Papineau. Certains sont connus, d'autres pas, mais tous sont anonymes pour l'occasion. Cinq caméramans les accompagnent. La violoneuse commence, puis d'autres entament le Reel Bergeville et le Reel à Jos Cormier sur les deux quais de la station.





partout, de l'avenue Mont-Royal au plein cœur du Plateau à Montréal, où des gens jouaient sur des balcons ou se mêlaient à la foule, jusqu'au marché Jean Talon, où un conteur a fini par s'installer sur une table à pique-nique. À Québec, ce fut dans les escaliers du quartier du Petit Champlain, alors qu'à Saint-Charles-Borromée, la joyeuse bande s'est arrêtée au Festival Mémoire et Racines. Pour une autre mission, on a sillonné cinq festivals de Sainte-Marie de Beauce jusqu'au parc Lafontaine à Montréal.

Dans certains cas, le commando a accepté des partenariats avec des événements comme la Grande Rencontre ou Nuit blanche sur un tableau noir, mais a également refusé des propositions : « Si tu savais le nombre d'invitations qu'on a eu, surtout depuis la parution des vidéos », raconte Véronique. « Plusieurs nous perçoivent comme un groupe d'animation et voudraient profiter un peu du hook que nous avons, mais pour nous, le côté militant est super important et on est pas quelque chose de touristique. On ne fera jamais une action simplement parce que c'est une commande. Il faut toujours qu'il y ait un message à porter ».

Les participants aux missions se donnent tous des noms d'emprunt à consonance traditionnelle: Ruine-Babine, La Turlutte ou la Ronfleuse Gobeil à l'accordéon, Nuit blanche et le Bedeau de l'Enfer à la guitare, Ovila Légaré et le Père Bacchus à la mandoline, les Charbonniers, la Tuque bleue, Pitoune Boudreault, la Déroutée ou Arthémise au violon et Monsieur Pointu au banjo. « Les surnoms évoquent un projet très inclusif », explique Jean. « C'est comme dans les sessions. Tu peux être avec quelqu'un qui fait le tour du monde, alors que toi, tu ne joues que dans ton salon ».

Il y a aussi Ours qui tousse à la caméra. Celui-là, on le connaît, c'est Jean-François Dugas, le troisième larron de l'équipe des commandos. « Il fait la direction des caméras pendant les actions et la plupart des montages vidéos par la suite », explique Jean. Il a réalisé de formidables montages de gens qui se filmaient en jouant un peu partout à travers le monde en écoutant les deux missions que le Commando offrait dans des stations de radio montréalaises. Jean-François capte les réactions des gens sur le vif, avant que Jean et Véronique reçoivent les feedback suite à l'audition des vidéos. « En général, les gens sont vraiment

emballés. Le commentaire qui revient le plus porte sur la grande fierté. Certains ont versé des larmes », raconte Véronique.

Et le projet fait des petits. À Bordeaux, Trad'Escouade a publié quelques vidéos. Il y a aussi Marée Trad en Bretagne, Celtic Guerillas à Vancouver et Folk Ambush à Liverpool, tous des projets d'artistes qui célèbrent leur musique traditionnelle dans des lieux publics. Et quelles sont les suites à prévoir pour le Commando trad? « Le projet est un peu sur la glace, mais ça a toujours été de comme ça », précise Jean. « Mais, même s'il n'y a pas d'actions dans le moment, il faut en parler. Quand les vidéos sont diffusées, elles deviennent intemporelles. Ce qui reste, c'est l'image ». Les idées continuent d'entrer et d'autres missions seront éventuellement menées. Mais pour l'instant, Véronique et Jean font une pause pour s'occuper de leur petite fille de cinq mois.

## Annabelle Chvostek Ensemble

Rise (Borealis)

Imprégnée de la colère du mouvement Occupy, la sortie de Rise sera sans pitié, selon Annabelle Chvostek. De grandes chansons, une profonde humanité et un message qui vaut la peine d'être entendu, franchement, il n'y a rien à détester sur cet album. « End of the road » signale les intentions de la rockeuse acoustique qui y déclare : « Nous sommes tous égaux, tu ne peux pas détruire cette vérité avec ta violence ». « G20 Song » exprime le sentiment révolutionnaire universel, tout comme la formidable « Equal Right » de Peter Tosh, avec laquelle se termine l'album. Quelques pièces offrent une vision plus personnelle de la politique comme « Hartland Quay » et « Fox Tail », mais c'est pour sa vision sociale de la politique que l'on se rappellera de Rise selon moi. Le retour du folk engagé et militant? Espérons-le!

- Par Richard Thornley



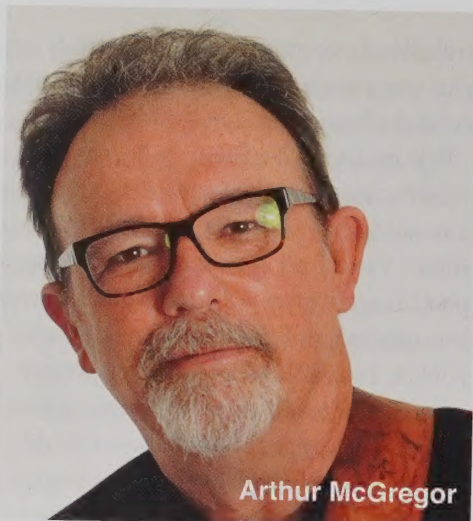
Des gens se retournent, une femme rit et certains finissent par s'arrêter ou bouger un peu en marchant.

« Nous sommes des artistes traditionnels avec un but de déranger », affirme Véronique. « On a fini par se rendre compte qu'il y avait trois objectifs à ça: rassembler le milieu traditionnel autour d'une action positive qui se démarque et se remarque, marquer l'imaginaire des gens qu'on rejoint et revendiquer la place de la musique traditionnelle. On est hyper conscients qu'en faisant de la musique traditionnelle, on transmet notre culture qui est forte et qui est notre identité aussi ».

D'où l'idée de porter l'âme collective dans des lieux inattendus avec souvent des intentions précises comme le suggèrent ces missions aux métros Papineau et Lionel Groulx, des lieux qui portent les noms de personnages québécois emblématiques. En s'arrêtant à l'université du Québec à Montréal, on a voulu revendiquer la place de la musique traditionnelle dans le système d'éducation : « Sauf au Cégep de Joliette et un peu à Drummondville, cette place est à peu près nulle au Québec », explique Véronique. « Il n'y a de programme ni dans les écoles primaires et secondaires, ni à l'université ».

En dépit de cela, le commando est passé





Arthur McGregor

**Arthur McGregor is the director of the Ottawa Folklore Centre. He takes a critical look at the artistic changes made to the Ottawa Folk Festival in recent years.**

In 1965, Pete Seeger was said to have disliked Bob Dylan's use of electric instruments at the Newport Folk Festival to the point he wanted to cut the mic cable with an axe. Actually, it's now accepted Seeger was upset he couldn't hear Dylan's voice because of the poor sound mix.

I've been party to similar grumbling about the revamped Ottawa Folk Festival: "it's not a folk festival; it's a pop festival", "the music is too loud", "there's no dance", "there's no French language music" ... Some of the criticisms are valid but, and this is the crux, this is Ottawa's new folk festival: either get on board and help it grow, flourish and evolve or don't!

In its last incarnation the festival failed to become sustainable. It just didn't resonate with enough locals and the then directors decided to accept an offer from the Ottawa Bluesfest organization to take over both its debt and its future. This refurbished event will have its growing pains and changes in taste but it has retained some important aspects: the Terry Penner Weekend Choir, the Helen Verger Award, the instruction workshops, the kids' area, and the instrument petting zoo.

This year, the evenings on the main stages were popular with the university crowd. Indeed, the festival was moved to early September to attract the thousands of students who flood into Ottawa. Thirteen thousand watched Anaïs Mitchell, Hey Rosetta and Bon Iver on a chilly Monday

evening. That ranks as the largest folk festival crowd ever here and it helped pay for the four or five thousand who came all day Saturday or Sunday to experience more traditional offerings.

This 'friendly coup' has resulted in many changes, from the programming to the venue. Hog's Back Park is in the centre of the city, just across the Rideau River from Carleton University. It's a large park with excellent accessibility: walking and bike trails, bus routes, lots of parking, and even a place to land your canoe! But there are some challenges: it's federal land and, as such, all signage has to be bilingual; and the bike path must be kept open at all times. The bilingual requirements are not onerous as Ottawa is a bilingual city. Unfortunately, the festival has yet to live up to that fact by hiring any of Canada's incredible French-language acts.

The bike path, though, led to the festival being cut in half with a series of eight-foot fences separating the main stage area on one side of the festival workshop stages, food concessions and crafts area on the other. To prevent the festival site looking like a POW camp again, this past year, organisers made the workshop/food/craft area free with only the main stage area requiring proof-of-ticket-purchase.

This 'free' area underlines the 'divisions' facing the festival. The main stage arena now appears popular with the student crowd during the big concerts while the free area is inhabited by a more trad' audience. Indeed, journalist Mike Regenster remarked that it's like two different festivals on one site.

Mark Monahan, AD of the Ottawa Folk Festival, is focused on hiring headline acts that will increase the attendance. His passion is seeing some of the world's most popular musicians featured on the main stage. He works very hard to keep on top of what's hot and, along with Ottawa's Bluesfest, operates with one of the largest budgets in the country. To date, he's focused on drawing a larger, younger audience: the kind of audience that the old festival board and, indeed, many festivals across Canada pine for. He's doing this by hiring acts like Dan Magnan, Ben Harper, Patrick Watson, Matthew Good, Bon Iver, and Great Big Sea and putting them in big concerts on the main stages. These are the 'new folk' acts

and much of it isn't going over well with the older crowd.

Along with the change in demographics comes change in the way the new crowd enjoys a festival. Since the attendance is way up, the main stage area is extremely crowded during the evening shows and there's no room for lawn chairs. I find that this is a problem. I'm not interested in standing for two or three hours.

On top of that, the music is loud – very loud. The sound bleed is unacceptable. Last year, Red Horse (Eliza Gilkyson, John Gorka and Lucy Kaplansky) was playing on a small free stage against Patrick Watson on the main stage with a full band. It was an insult to three of the finest songwriters in North America and a pain in the ass for the audience. The next day, I hosted a workshop with The Once, Eliza Gilkyson and Nudie. Across from us was a rock band, loud and out of place. This is a completely unnecessary and will hopefully be solved before next year.

The new Ottawa Folk Festival has the potential for a win-win situation with the evening folk-pop helping pay for the daytime workshops and small concerts. It's not the kind of music that's the problem: folk music is going to be continually redefined and will always leave some behind. The main problem is that "we can't hear the words!". To maintain the 'folk festival' description, the new folk must honour and respect the tradition. Maintain the same production values for all artists and audience in ALL the shows; reserve an area for chairs at the main stage; represent French language and all the musical ethnicities that make Canada; teach and lead traditional dance.

Perhaps the answer would be to indeed have two festivals: the daytime one would have low volume, intimate concerts and workshops and draw from the traditions that have brought us to the present. Perhaps even solicit donations from the daytime festival attendees to help them pay their way. When the main stage starts up, the smaller stages would close.

Is this the future? I hope not. I would prefer a united festival that leads rather than follows, a musical potpourri that presents a fine mix of trad and contemporary, a festival that lets you discover something unique. But I'd also prefer the Ottawa Folk Festival than no folk festival!





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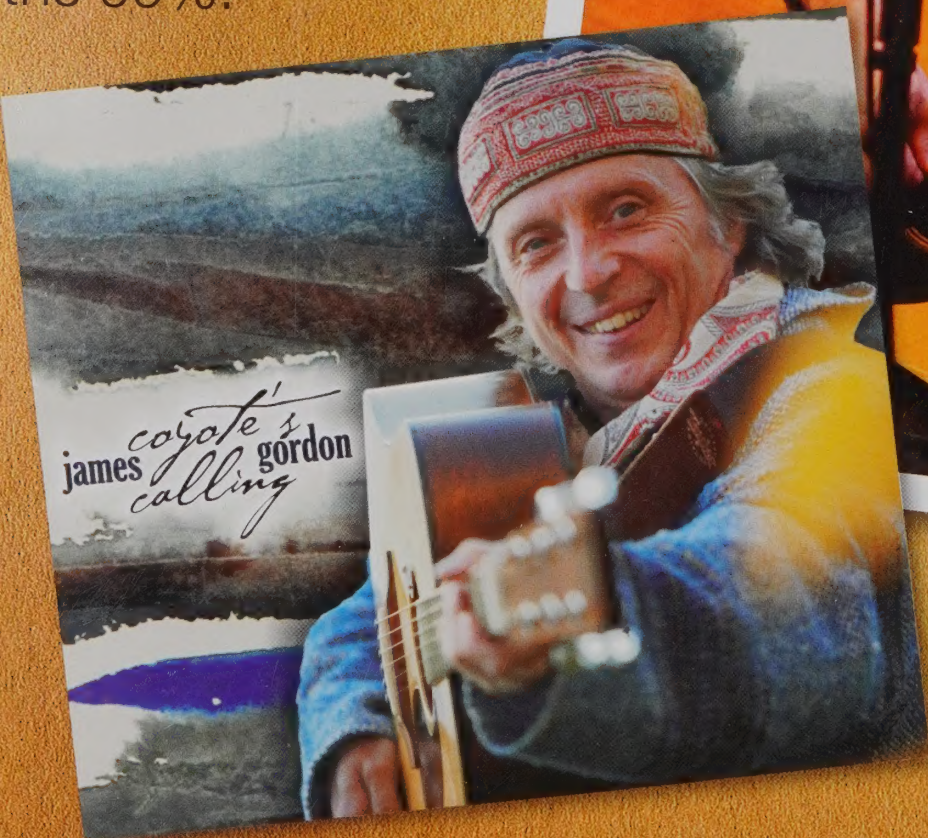
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